SEPT. 5

10¢

Exciting Mysteries

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FICTION WEEKLY

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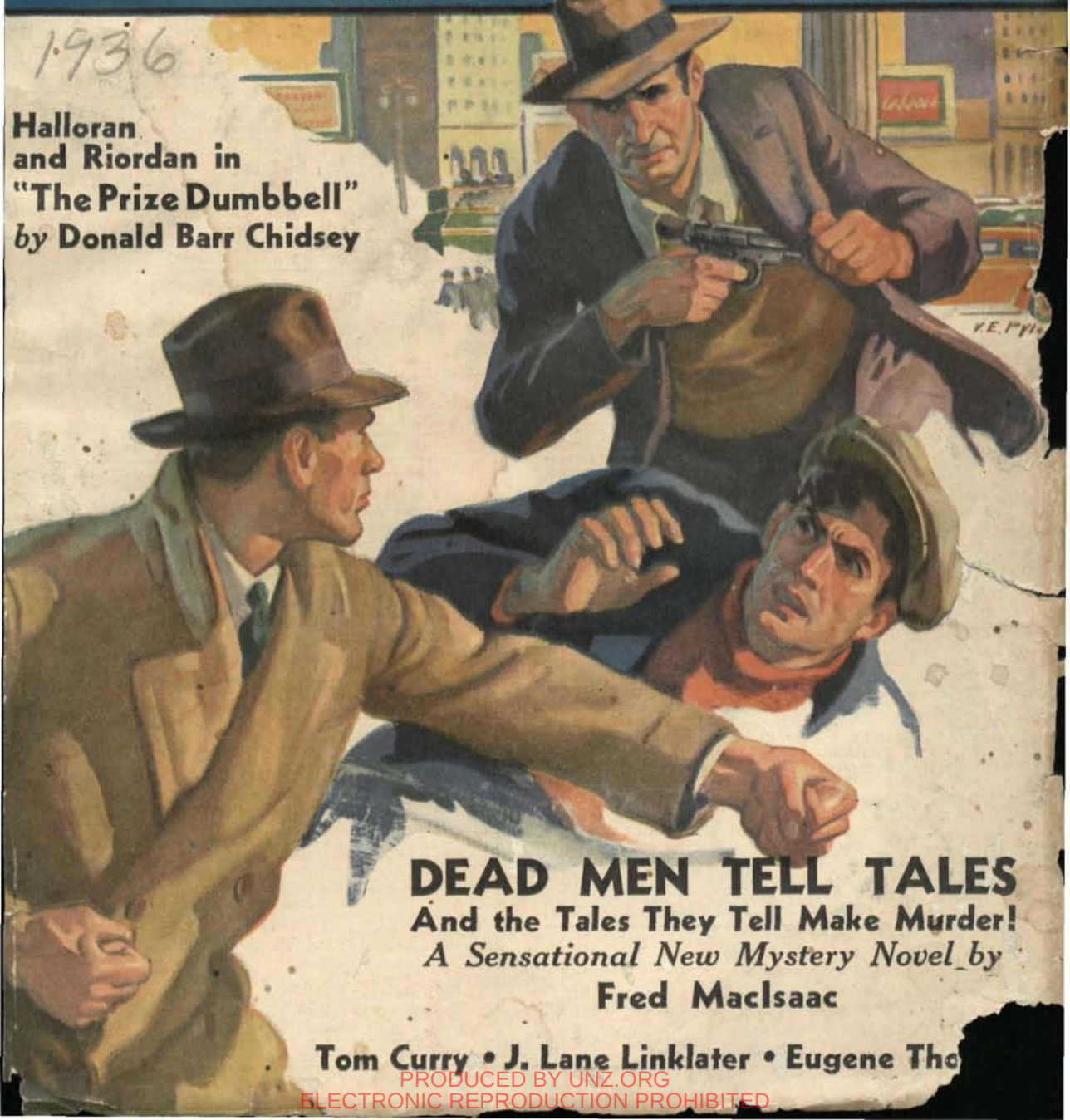
1936

Halloran and Riordan in "The Prize Dumbbell" *by* Donald Barr Chidsey



DEAD MEN TELL TALES

And the Tales They Tell Make Murder!

A Sensational New Mystery Novel by

Fred MacIsaac

Tom Curry • J. Lane Linklater • Eugene Tho

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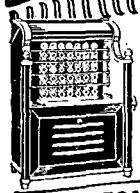

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CHOKE! * GASP!

ASTHMA

Illustration

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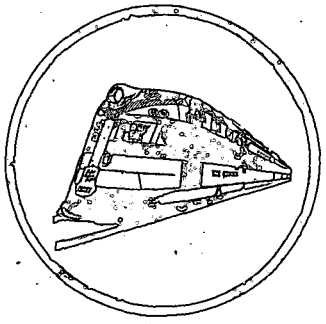
A COMING AMERICAN INDUSTRY



THE internal-combustion engine represents man's supreme triumph of machine power. Diesel engineers are in great demand. Many are acquiring necessary knowledge through spare-time study of this modern I. C. S. Course on Diesel engines. Free booklet!

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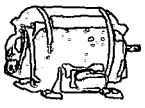

The new course in Electrical Engineering covers this fascinating field thoroughly. If you are just starting or are partly on the way to a real paying position in this industry, this new course brings the broader knowledge necessary for advancement. The coupon brings complete information.

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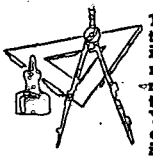

This course has meant advancement to hundreds of ambitious men, mechanics, draftsmen, blacksmiths, foundrymen, patternmakers, apprentices, and mechanical engineers—men who wanted to get ahead and to earn more money. You will find, as they have found, that enrolling for an I. C. S. Course is an investment in a Bigger Future.

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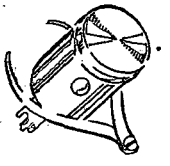
are always in demand



The rapid progress in manufacture and service of the modern automobile brings new opportunities to thousands of ambitious and forward-looking men. There's always a demand for trained men. The new I. C. S. Automobile Course will make you a trained man! The time to act is now.

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DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

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Formerly FLYNN'S

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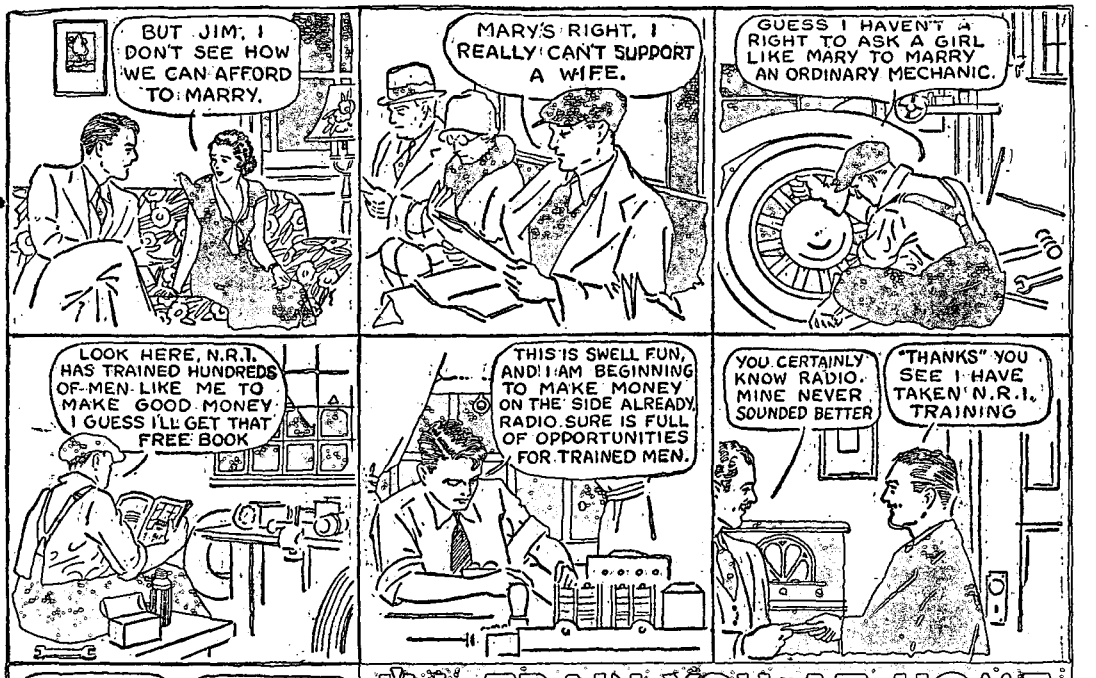
BUT JIM, I DON'T SEE HOW WE CAN AFFORD TO MARRY.
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GUESS I HAVEN'T A RIGHT TO ASK A GIRL LIKE MARY TO MARRY AN ORDINARY MECHANIC.
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YOU CERTAINLY KNOW RADIO. MINE NEVER SOUNDED BETTER
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OH! JIM, IT'S WONDERFUL. NOW YOU'RE ON THE WAY TO SUCCESS
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I'LL TRAIN YOU AT HOME *In Your Spare Time For A* GOOD RADIO JOB

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Mail the coupon now for "Rich Rewards in Radio." It's free to any fellow over 16 years old. It describes Radio's spare time and full time opportunities, also those coming in Television; tells about my Training in Radio and Television; shows you actual letters from men I have trained, telling what they are doing and earning; tells about my Money Back Agreement. MAIL COUPON in an envelope, or paste on a post card—NOW!

J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 6JK
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

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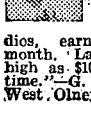

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"I knew nothing about Radio. After four lessons I began servicing Radios, earning $50 the first month. Last winter I made as high as $100 a month in spare time."—G. F. WALTON, 803 West Olney Road, Norfolk, Va.

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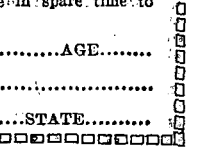
ADDRESS.....

CITY.....STATE.....



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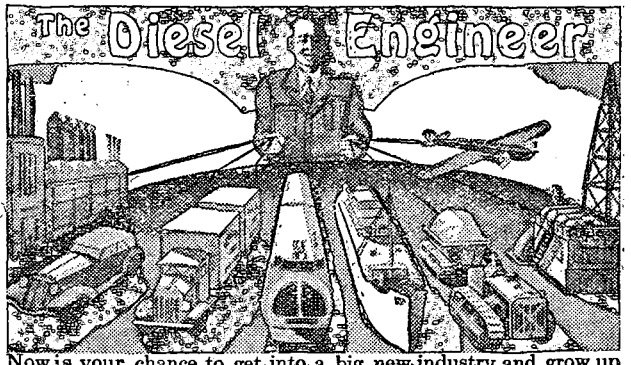
The Diesel Engineer



Is Your Job Safe?

Just as the gasoline engine changed the jobs of thousands who depended on horse-drawn vehicles for their living—so now the Diesel engine is fast invading both the power and transportation fields, and threatening the present jobs of thousands of workers.

What This New Field Offers You

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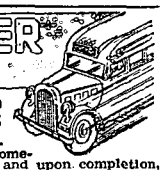

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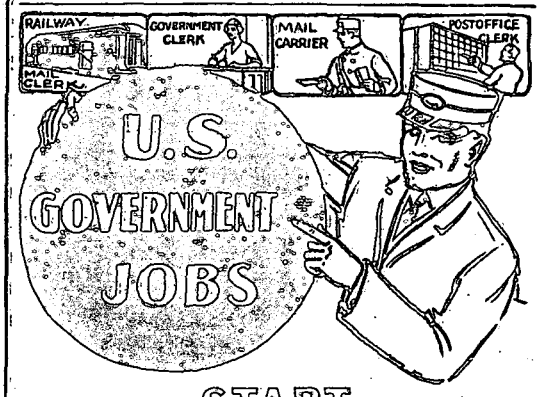

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Flashes from the Police Front

(NOTE: It is the purpose of this department to warn readers in all sections of the country of the latest schemes designed to defraud them, and in many instances, the names and descriptions of the operators. If you are approached by any of these schemers, get all the information possible and report the circumstances immediately to your local police authorities. They will know what to do. Rest assured that you will be doing someone a favor. Man is the only animal that can be skinned more than once.)

ADVANCE FEE

E. H. Reuter Indicted; Wanted by Authorities

CHARGED with having obtained $2,500 through the operation of an "advance fee" scheme, E. H. Reuter and his wife, Alma, were named in a secret indictment by a Federal Grand Jury in Cincinnati. Mrs. Reuter is under arrest.

The Reuters advertised in various periodicals posing as counsellors in the refinancing and reorganization of distressed companies. When answers were received to their advertising, the Reuters would collect as much "expense money" as possible without rendering any service in return.

They are reported to have made extravagant claims of their resources including the statement that they, unaided, could do $3,000,000 in refinancing every six months and that this amount could be greatly increased through their "financial connections."

The Reuters have used various addresses in this scheme, recent ones being the Bedford Building, Chicago; a post office box in Richmond, Ind., and Dayton, Ohio. If you encounter Reuter or have had business dealings with him, notify Postal Inspector Harry West, Dayton, Ohio.

GOLD MINES

Canadian Companies Sell Stock in U. S.

SEVERAL American promoters who formerly operated in New York and other Eastern cities have, due to the activities of the S. E. C., moved their offices to Canadian cities and are using tipster sheets and long distance telephone calls to unload their questionable gold-mining stocks on Americans.

No legitimate brokers will ever call you on the long distance telephone in an effort to sell stocks nor do they use tipster sheets in promoting the sale of stocks. Both of these methods are characteristic of fakers.

"CEDERLAC"

Harry Paulsen Quits Houston

PAULSEN, who calls himself a chemist, opened an office in Houston, Texas, under the name of "Cederlac Company." He then advertised for men and when they appeared at his office he demanded a "cash bond," claiming that they would be handling considerable money for "Cederlac" which was employing them to mothproof clothes closets with a cedar preparation.

Paulsen gave fictitious references

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Flashes from the Police Front

when questioned and skipped town during the investigation, leaving some men short of cash and others holding his bad checks. Notify Houston authorities if he appears in your town.

COUNTERFEIT

Forged Motor Parts Offered to Public

UNITED MOTORS SERVICE, distributors of genuine replacement parts, have issued a warning to the effect that Delco-Remy ignition replacement parts are now being counterfeited and offered to the trade at cut prices.

The material and workmanship in these fake parts are very poor, but they are packed in tin-capped boxes bearing a skillfully forged label of the copyright design. It is very difficult to detect these parts by a casual examination, but your motor notices the difference immediately, owing to the poor workmanship and measurements.

PUZZLE SCHEME

Des Moines Concern Subject of Complaint

THE Federal Trade Commission has issued a complaint against the Betty White Corporation, Des Moines, Iowa, charging false and misleading representations in the sale of cosmetics and toilet preparations.

The company's advertising purported to offer a first prize of an automobile sedan to the first person sending in the correct answer to a puzzle contest. The complaint charges that the actual winner was required to purchase and sell a quantity of the company's preparations in order to win and that these sales are the primary purpose of the contest.

The Commission has taken similar action against other companies who have used this system to dispose of merchandise.

FALSE PRETENSE

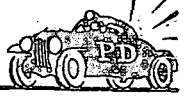
Railroad "Brotherhood" Operated by Fakers

JACK WHITNEY and J. L. Stark are roaming the country soliciting advertising for a "convention souvenir program" of the nonexistent "The Four Transportation Brotherhoods and Auxiliaries Associations" of Louisville, Ky.

The chief of detectives of Louisville says, "Four Transportation Brotherhoods has no connection with Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen." And A. F. Whitney, president of the B. R. T., Cleveland, Ohio, states, "J. L. Clark not member of, or representing our organization, and known to us as a faker."

The men named above recently tried their scheme in Tulsa, Oklahoma, but left town hurriedly when an investigation was started. They have plenty of literature and receipts printed with the name of the "Four Brotherhoods" and will undoubtedly try their scheme elsewhere.

(*Continued on Page 143*)



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"Kick him out," bellowed Patterson. "Throw him into the street!"

Dead Men Tell Tales

By Fred MacIsaac

CHAPTER I

Old Friends Meet

WELL, it seems that the Stephen Steele Case was the most amazing conspiracy of modern times—that's what John Bankerman, head of the Department of Justice, declares. And a fellow by the name of Tim Cody—that's yours truly—why, because of the case, is likely to receive the thanks of Congress if he doesn't watch out.

It wasn't until the show was about over that I discovered I had been serving my country in a big way. Between you and me and the gate post, I hadn't known what I was up against. If I hadn't met up with a magnificent lunatic named Richard Barton and his sister Clarice, who was plenty wild, also, I wouldn't have got to first base in this business. That swell old gentleman Upton Reynolds, with his legal brain and his white whiskers, had a lot to do with cracking open the con-

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"Listen, you rat, I'll tell the papers every word of what you've just said to me!"

spiracy, but the whole gang sidestepped and made Tim Cody take the bow.

Bankerman, in private conversation, tells people that it was maudlin sentiment that motivated Tim Cody. Maybe that's right. I took my life in my hands for the sake of the best friend I'd ever had. And my sentiment may be maudlin, but it wouldn't have sent me out to lay down my life for the United States Treasury Department, if I thought so.

Anyway, the Government wants a detailed narrative of the Stephen Steele investigation to be published as a public document. So with the aid of a secretary and a dictaphone and Clarice and Dick Barton, I'm trying to tell it as if you and I were sitting down and having a talk. There was a period when I was in cold storage, so Dick Bar-

Scareheads Blazoned the Brutal Murder of Stephen Steele, Heir to Motor Millions. But Detective Tim Cody Believed His Classmate Was Still Alive and Guessed Why Newspapers Dared Not Print the Astounding Truth

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ton carries on the yarn at that point. If you read it you'll probably say that Tim Cody didn't display any uncanny acumen and you'll be right.

It happened that there was a daring and ingenious plot with a gigantic sum of money involved. Bankerman says that it was almost air tight and the criminals could not have been expected to take into consideration an ex-cop named Tim Cody. How were they to know that I admired Steve Steele tremendously and that nobody could make me believe that a man like him had turned black overnight?

And even if they had known about me they would have been justified in paying no attention to me. It was because they did pay attention to me after a while that they got into hot water.

So you can understand why I crashed the party, you have to know about this friendship between the grandson of one of the richest men in America and a fellow like me.

From the time he was nine until he was nineteen, Steve went to the Eli Evans School in Providence. It was a Quaker school founded in the eighteenth century and had a big endowment. While it catered to rich kids who lived in fine dormitories, there was a clause in its charter compelling it to take town boys as day pupils for a nominal sum, which is why my mother was able to send me to Eli Evans. My mother was a widow with no money to speak of.

While I never heard that he practiced Brotherly Love, old Jonathan Steele, the Motor Magnate, was a Quaker and sent his grandson to Eli. Perhaps Steve and I would not have been such pals if the old man had treated the boy as the families of the other rich boarders treated them. That old curmudgeon, who had half a billion if he had a dime, started Steve off at school with a dollar a week allowance, and that's all he got until the day he graduated. As he grew older it was kind of embarrassing for him. It cut him off from the other boarders, most of whom had low racing cars and were a menace to the population of Providence. And they were calling on girls and going to dances, which never cost them less than five bucks an evening.

Well, my mother gave me a dollar a week, and I was as well off as Steve. I suppose we'd have cottoned to each other anyway. We managed to have a lot of fun at small expense. We both made the baseball team and the football team and we got a lot of nice trips to Boston and Worcester and other places where there were rival schools, expenses paid. Steve used to come down to my house a couple of times a week when we were in our teens. He complained that the chuck at the school wasn't in the same class with what Marm brought in on a platter.

Anyway, they dubbed us Damon and Pythias and it didn't bother us after we found out who those guys were.

DURING our senior year we were sort of sad. Steve was going to enter Yale the next fall, and yours truly, Tim Cody, had to find himself a job. I had a broken-down Ford by that time, and we ran around in it a lot. Though Steve's grandfather owned the biggest motor car works in the world, he wouldn't even let Steve have an old demonstrator. He said boys had no business owning cars; they caused three quarters of the accidents. I reckon he was right at that.

Well, we graduated from Eli Evans and we felt pretty badly at separating. We were going to keep up the old

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friendship, but I knew it couldn't be done. We did write to each other a lot the first year and then I forget who forgot to answer who's letter. I was sensitive of course. I had a punk job in the stock room of a department store in Providence, and Steve was in the Skull and Bones, or whatever you call it, at Yale. Anyway I didn't hear from him after the second year. My mother died and I lost my job. There were no jobs in Providence, so I went over to New York and did some high class and fancy starving. Then I did something for an Alderman who was stewed and was knocked over by a couple of yeggs who were going to frisk him, and he fixed it for me to get into the Police Training School.

By that time, I suppose I'd brushed off a lot of the refining influences of old Eli Evans. I was just a big, two-fisted, light-haired, blue-eyed cop's apprentice.

Every now and then I read something about old Steve in the papers. I read where he graduated "summa cum laude" from Yale and went to Switzerland to complete his education at the University of Geneva. I wasn't jealous of Steve, who was entitled to the best of it, because he was about the swellest egg in the basket.

He was abroad for years. I often thought of dropping him a line, but he might have changed. How did I know? I was on the force regularly tramping the pavements, trying the doors of shops to see if the boss had locked up for the night and, occasionally, getting a little exercise with the night stick.

The day they appointed me a plain-clothes man and gave me a lift in salary, I read that Jonathan Steele had resigned the Presidency of the Steele Motor Company and had become President of the Board, whatever that means. It was because the old skinflint had got to be eighty years old. I thought, at the time, that it wouldn't be long before they called Steve back to take charge up in Detroit. Maybe we'd meet some day and he might give me a job as a Company detective at big dough. Though, of course I wouldn't ask for it. All I wanted of Steve was to be his friend. Probably he wouldn't even recognize me if he saw me. I'd filled out and looked—well, I looked like a cop.

Old Steele and I seemed to coincide. I mean I read an article about him playing golf with John D. Rockefeller for the world's Championship in the Old Timers' Class the day I stepped on somebody's foot in New York. I don't know yet what I did—probably my full duty, but I was dropped from the force and told not to ask why or they might have to send me to jail. A cop can be ruined as easy as Cæsar's wife or maybe I have the historic reference wrong. It's a long time since I tried to read Latin at Eli Evans School.

Well, there was a career gone to the devil and a big depression still depressing and no jobs, even for people who hadn't been kicked off the police force in disgrace.

I WAS walking along Fifth Avenue one afternoon wondering if those squalling Russian Communists down on Union Square were right. I never thought anything about them when I used to hit them over the head with a club in my uniformed days on account of they were having a riot.

A guy passed me, took a look at me—I was studying the pavement—grabbed me, swung me round and howled like a Comanche. "Tim Cody,

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by the Lord Harry!" he yelled. "You blanked old blankety blank!"

And I took a look at Steve Steele, personal appearance, not a motion picture. This was the same day I was down to one dollar. I always put two things together in placing a date. It was March 22, 1936.

"'You blankety blank blank yourself,'" I said with a grin. "'So you remember me, do you? I don't have to show finger-prints?'"

"'Confound you, Tim,'" says Steve as if he was sore. "'I've hunted New York for you. Why didn't you ever answer my letters?'"

"'Why didn't you ever answer mine?'" I comes back. We looked at each other and we both burst out laughing and then he took my arm.

"'Let's go somewhere,'" he said.

Steve looked just the same, younger than me, of course, because colleges don't wear you down like the New York police force. He had on a blue suit with a little pink stripe in it and an iron hat, but he didn't look much better than me because I hadn't worn out all my good clothes yet. He was taller and he had taken to wearing spectacles during his last year in Eli Evans. He looked like the cat's "what-do-you-call-'ems" to me. We went into a bar.

"'I've only been back a week. Of course, I knew you had come to New York, but I couldn't find you in the telephone book.'"

"'Got crowded out. Too many Cohens in it!'"

"'Same old comic,'" he said, delighted. We drank our drinks.

He grew serious. "'Old man,'" he said, "'the reason I wanted to find you was to be my best man. I'm going to be married.'"

"'Ain't you made any friends at all?'" I asked to cover the way I felt to have him say a thing like that.

"'You're my oldest, though we've been out of touch—which is your fault, not mine. You'll love her, Tim. I met her on the boat coming home. She's absolutely adorable.'"

"'If she loves me, she ought to have her head examined.'"

He punched me in the chest, laughing like a fool. I had a lump in my throat because the son of a gun obviously was tickled to see me. The guy who was going to own a half a billion dollars.

"'How are you getting along—in business, I mean?'" he asks.

"'Me? Oh, I doing fine.'" I should pour my troubles in his lap.

He blinked at me through his spectacles. "'I don't believe you. Wait till I get in the saddle, Tim. At the present time I have no influence at all. Grandfather pays no attention to my requests. However, he's eighty-two.'"

"'Don't count on it, kid,'" I told him. "'Rockefeller is a hundred and two or thereabouts.'"

"'I haven't seen the old man since he came to Geneva three years ago. He was pretty feeble then. Since he's treated me like an orphan child you can't expect me to feel very affectionate about him. As for the company officials, I'll fire the whole caboodle of them. I called on President Patterson today to get a job for a chap I met on the steamer; a man who had a big job in France and lost it on account of the depression. Patterson said the company was firing not hiring and shooed me out. Sort of short-sighted, eh?'"

"'I met him when I was on the police force,'" I told him. "'Oh, yes. I've been a cop. Embezzlement case in the New York office, but extenuating circumstances. I caught the thief and then

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went to bat for him. The old walrus hasn't any decency. He sent the poor guy up for eight years."

Steve nodded. "I can imagine he would. It's about time I had a heart-to-heart talk with grandfather. They made a Doctor of Philosophy out of me, but I want to make motor cars. Look, Tim. I have a date with my fiancée. I want you to meet her. Call at my suite at the Waldorf at five and have cocktails with us. It's an engagement. You be there or I'll beat the life out of you. I bet a dollar I can still do it."

"You never did it, but I'll be there," I promised him.

When I went out on the street again I felt like a different man. It was great to have a friend, swell to know that the old boy was as fond of me as he ever was. If I could do anything for Steve, but, what the heck could I do for a guy who had everything?"

CHAPTER II

Tim Meets a Girl

AT five o'clock sharp I turned up at the Waldorf in my best bib and tucker. A couple of old friends could meet and bull each other, but when one of them is on top of the world and the other is down and out, it's pretty nice of the first one to insist on introducing the second one to the girl he's crazy about. I'm setting all this down because you've got to understand why I did what I did, took the chances I took, and why I went through hell and high water for Steve Steele.

When they admitted me to Steve's suite, he was sitting at a tea table with a girl. He jumped up and she turned and smiled at me. She was a girl to stop traffic. She was a girl that put out the lights of other girls. While she was small, she made you think she was tall. She had scads of shining gold hair, braided and wound round and round her head. Her eyes were very large and gray, her cheeks were like pink satin. One glimpse and I certainly didn't blame the boy.

"About time you showed up," exclaimed Steve. "Darling, this is old Tim Cody. Tim, the future Mrs. Steele temporarily known as Rhoda Robinson."

I recognized her then. Who wouldn't? Her pictures were always in the papers. She had been a blues singer in night clubs and then the star of a musical comedy. I had read where she had gone to London to work in a show. I gave her the once over. Very soft for a Broadway gal to land the lad who was going to be worth half a billion. I'm a pretty good judge of character, but being a cop makes you cynical. I thought it was the old army game till she took my hand in hers and crinkled her eyes and smiled up at me so sweetly.

After that there were two of us who thought she was the whole female sex. I felt soft and silly. My heart turned somersaults. Let Steve's Quaker grandfather raise hell and you bet he would when he heard about this. I was for Steve and Rhoda through thick and thin.

Her voice was low and rich like organ music. Her laugh—well, we'll cut the mush. I sat down and tried to like a cup of tea, while she sat there staring at him as though he were the King of England, and he told me how they had fallen for each other on the ship coming home. They couldn't get married right away. She was rehearsing in a show and her contract called for her to be single. But in a few months—

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they'd have me for best man and how!

"I want you to sort of keep an eye on my girl," said Steve, after a while. "I'm flying to California tomorrow to see my grandfather. I don't want a secretary telling him the news. I don't want him to get a wrong idea of Rhoda. I'll tell him myself. I wired him I had to see him about something of terrific importance. He's at Santa Barbara this winter."

"Rhoda doesn't want me tagging her round," I said, blushing to the ears.

"Oh, don't I?" she comes back. "You're a pretty attractive young man, Tim. Much better looking than Steve. If you know what I mean, you resemble a mythological character named Apollo."

Steve roared. "Considering that we went to prep school together he should know what you mean. Though I'd say Hercules, if Hercules were clean shaven."

"You're to check in at my hotel, the Savoy, every day to find out if I need an escort," she commanded, almost sternly.

That scared me. Escorting a dame who only went to smart places, with a few dimes in my pocket. However, I figured this was only the old pazazz.

"Sure," I said, red as a tomato. "We'll hit the high spots. When are you coming back, Steve?"

"Immediately after seeing Jonathan. Four or five days at the most."

"And suppose he says 'nothing doing'!"

Steve laughed. "I'm twenty-five. And I have come into a hundred thousand dollars from my mother's estate which was held in trust for me. Let him disinherit me. Who cares?"

"I certainly don't," declared Rhoda, and I knew she meant what she said.

"I think Tim better take me over to Newark," she added. "I'm probably going to act up when the plane flies away with Steve. You can bring me back, Tim. Will you?"

"You bet. What time does the plane leave, Steve?"

"Three in the afternoon. I have to see my lawyer in the morning on some business and we'll have lunch here, the three of us, and go over in a hotel limousine."

"And Tim can take me to dinner," she added.

"Sure," I agreed. I was wondering how I could raise the dough. I hadn't taken to hocking things yet. I had a presentation gold watch that dated from when I was going good in the police department, and some gold studs I'd bought myself. I'd be all right.

Well, I gave 'em my address, a rooming house on West 46th Street—and I left about half past six.

IN the morning I called on the pawnbroker and got fixed up and the three of us had a swell lunch and then we rode over to Newark and saw the greatest guy in the world take the air. And I never had a premonition of what was going to happen.

Rhoda and I had lots of fun on the way back and she made me have dinner at her hotel and signed the check. That's the kind of girl she was.

Of course I didn't call her up after that. Rhoda was making Steve's friend her friend, because it made him feel good, but she didn't want me under foot when he was away. I spent my time hunting for a job with my usual bad luck.

About nine o'clock, four mornings later, Mrs. Murphy, who ran the lodging house, pounded on my door when I was putting my hat on.

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"There's a moll that wants to talk to you on the telephone," she said nastily. "And tell her not to be calling lodgers on my phone. Why should I be climbing four flights of stairs to tell a man that hasn't paid his rent for two weeks that some fantail wants to speak to him?"

"This will be the secretary of J. P. Morgan calling me up to come to work, Mrs. Murphy," I told her with a straight face. "And you ought to be willing to climb four flights of stairs to get the rent I owe you."

"I've heard big talk before," she said with a sniff. "And don't think you can kid me, young feller. I'm an old bird, I am."

I go downstairs and pick up the phone and almost drop dead when it's Rhoda's voice saying, "Is that you, Tim?"

"Miss Robinson," I gasped.

"Tim, where have you been? I had an awful time getting your telephone number."

"I'm mighty glad you got it, Miss Robinson."

"Tim, I'm terribly worried about Steve. I haven't heard from him since he arrived in Los Angeles three days ago."

That made me laugh. "I didn't hear from him for six years or so," I replied.

"But he promised to wire or telephone every day," she wailed.

"Probably he's busy. You'll hear."

"I know he arrived in Los Angeles. I've already talked with the airplane company."

"Maybe his grandfather is intercepting his messages. I've read of things like that in books."

"Tim, I'm afraid something's wrong. I'm horribly worried. I wish—oh, I suppose you're busy."

"If there was anything I could do—"

"Of course you can't. Well, it's been a comfort to talk to you. Good-by, Tim."

She hung up. It was a cinch old Jonathan had hit the roof when Steve told him he was going to marry an actress. Maybe they were taking steps to break the thing off. Fat chance. I knew Steve Steele.

Well, nothing doing in the job line that day. I got up early the next morning to read the want ads. I went out before breakfast to buy a paper, and there was an eight column head in block letters.

JONATHAN STEELE'S GRANDSON MURDERED

I staggered against the wall of a building. My eyes were riveted to the page. Feeling more and more ill, I read the article underneath the heading. It didn't seem possible it could be true—a dirty lie! Steve dead? Why, only the other day— Well, here's what it said:

About eleven P.M., Pacific time, last night, Patrolman Luke Carter, Los Angeles Police Force, assigned to get evidence against a vice resort known as Black Mike's on Central Avenue, stumbled over the body of a man in the alley back of the joint. It was a dead body, and he notified headquarters. A radio car arrived within five minutes and the body was taken to the Morgue. From letters and cards in his wallet, the body was identified as that of Stephen Steele, grandson of Jonathan Steele, the multi-millionaire, at present at his palatial estate at Santa Barbara.

Among the letters was one from Miss Rhoda Robinson, stage star, who appears to be affianced to young Steele. It has been ascertained that Mr. Steele landed from a Transcontinental plane at the Glendale Airport two days previously and took a taxi to the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles, where he registered. His lug-

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gage, comprising two suitcases, is in his room there.

Jonathan Steele, the grandfather, was notified by phone. He was so shocked that he took to his bed. His secretary is on his way to identify the body.

I DON'T know how I got back into my room. I must have looked like a shell-shocked veteran. I was all gone inside. I wanted to break down and cry like a kid, but the tears wouldn't come. I hadn't suffered any more when my mother died. I'd have felt terrible if I had read about Steve's death in Europe, but, after we'd got together again, after he'd shown me he was as swell as he ever had been—well, probably you can imagine what this did to me.

I thought of Rhoda. It would just about finish Rhoda. Maybe she hadn't heard yet. Perhaps it was my duty to break the news to her. Well, I couldn't. I'd call her later in the day when I had pulled myself together.

Bye and bye my police training began to function. Steve was dead—if this was Steve and not somebody who had robbed him and had flashed around Steve's money and got scragged. That was an idea. It must be that. Imagine Steve, with a girl like Rhoda and the background he had, playing around in Black Belt dives. But in that case, where was Steve?

If Steve was laying in the Morgue in California, who killed him and why? Somebody who benefited by his death? The next of kin, maybe. Who was the new heir of old Jonathan?

I knew what the police theory would be. Rich playboy, hitting the high spots, croaked for his wad. We usually worked on that theory, and mostly we were right. Not Steve, though. He was in love with Rhoda and was anxious to get back to her. He wouldn't have hung round Los Angeles for a couple of days. He would have rushed right up to Santa Barbara. There was something mighty queer about all of it.

Old Jonathan, with all the money in the world, would get service from the Los Angeles police. This mystery would be solved in a few days. The facts would show how Steve was dragged up to this negro district. He hadn't gone there of his own free will—maybe he was dead when they took him there. By some oversight, the paper didn't mention whether he was stabbed or shot or poisoned. Well, the details would be in the afternoon papers. Eleven o'clock in Los Angeles was two A.M. in New York. The New York papers had just time to squeeze a brief account into the late City editions.

I lay down on the bed, being slug nutty. I lay there an hour, just grieving. After that I knew I had to go to Rhoda. Being his oldest friend, it might help her a little to have me round. She must know by this time.

"Please ask Miss Robinson if she will see Mr. Cody?" I requested of the clerk at the Savoy.

"Miss Robinson has checked out," he told me.

"Did—did she leave an address?" I mumbled. "Or any word for Mr. Timothy Cody?"

"She left no message for you, Mr. Cody. And no address. As a matter of fact, she took a plane for California very early this morning."

"Thanks." I went over and sat on a chair in the lobby. I was in a sort of glow. That's what Rhoda was like. She didn't take to her bed, but got right on the job. Of course the Los Angeles police had wired her when they found she was engaged to him. She would

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have received the message at four or five in the morning, and in a couple of hours she was in a plane bound west. She figured, as I had, that it wasn't Steve. If it wasn't, she'd know in a flash. She didn't believe he was a rounder any more than I did. I was hurt, maybe, because she hadn't got in touch with me, but, after all, why should she?

I smiled wryly.

She had done what I would have done, if I'd had the price. I was nailed to New York by my financial condition.

Back at my lodging house and I find a phone message from the Byron Detective Agency—maybe they were looking after the New York end. Probably they had found out I was a friend of Steve's. It's one of the high-class agencies in New York. I called them right up.

"Mr. Cody," said Byron's secretary, "are you still out of employment?"

"Yes."

"Well, Mr. Byron would like to see at once."

So, when I didn't care much what happened to me, I landed a job. It seemed that the Byron Agency had had to send four good men out of town on a big case and needed operatives. Byron told me he knew the inside of my trouble with the Police Department and wasn't worried about me. "You're all right," he said. "I turned down your previous application because I didn't need anybody, not that I distrusted you, Mr. Cody. I want you to look into a jewel robbery for an insurance company which is one of our clients. Smells fishy. Start you at fifty dollars a week."

As a man has to live, I took the job, but I wasn't set up as I would have been the day before. I looked over the papers on the case and went to work.

CHAPTER III

Dirty Linen

THE afternoon papers played up the murder of Stephen Steele. It seemed that his throat had been cut with a razor. The police had taken in half a dozen suspects. There was no doubt it was Steve whose body had been found. Mr. Thomas Judson, Jonathan Steele's secretary, had identified it.

You could tell by the tone of the article that the papers thought Steve had been on a toot. It was a sickening mess. Not having seen the old boy for years and years, aside from two days in New York before he left for California, I had no knowledge of what he had turned out to be. My character testimony would not have had weight in any court, but I took no stock in the insinuations. There were some cracks about the blues singer to whom he was engaged. And it went to prove he was a high roller, in the opinion of the editors. That made me boil.

I went after that jewel robbery, and in two days I had a confession from the woman who had tried to cheat the insurance company. Byron immediately gave me a ten dollar raise and a suave promise of permanent employment.

On the third morning I was called down to the office of a lawyer named Upton Reynolds on Broad Street and got a terrific shock.

This Reynolds was a mild old boy with gray side whiskers that come to a point. He invited me to have a chair and sized me up plenty.

"I am the attorney for the estate of the late Stephen Steele," he said.

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"I understand, Mr. Cody, that you knew him very well."

"We went to school together. We were like that," I said.

"You saw him recently."

"The day before he left for California. And I saw him off on the plane with Miss Robinson, his fiancée."

"You know Miss Robinson well?"

"I met her the same day I ran into Steve. She's a wonderful girl, sir."

"That was your impression? The papers are trying to make her out an adventuress."

"I know it," I said bitterly. "She was as crazy about Steve as he was about her. She hopped to California as soon as she heard what had happened to Steve."

"I know. Apparently his grandfather feels bitterly toward her. Mr. Hubbard, of Hubbard, Brown and Folkes, the Steele Company attorneys, asked me some pointed questions about her. I do not happen to know the lady."

"Maybe they think she sent him to that dive, if he went—which I don't believe," I said angrily.

"I had very slight personal acquaintance with Mr. Steele. I turned his estate over to him recently and he came in, the morning of his departure for California, to make his will. It would seem that he had a premonition."

"I think he mentioned he was going to see his lawyer. Miss Robinson and I lunched with him that day."

"The reason I sent for you, Mr. Cody, was to inform you that, in the will of Mr. Steele, you are one of the beneficiaries."

My mouth fell open. My eyes popped out of my head. I couldn't speak. The old lawyer smiled at me benevolently.

"You will receive the sum of ten thousand dollars. I congratulate you, Mr. Cody."

"I—I can't take it," I said brokenly. "I didn't want anything from Steve. I loved that boy, Mr. Reynolds."

"I understand, young man. Mr. Steele apparently appreciated your friendship for him. You had better take the money, since he wished you to have it. Since you have such a high opinion of Miss Robinson, you will be gratified to learn that she inherits the balance of the estate of a hundred thousand dollars."

"I certainly am glad of that."

"Mr. Steele didn't impress me as a dissipated and immoral young man. I confess to being greatly shocked at this revelation of his character."

"You take it from me, sir, there's something rotten in all this. Steve was in love with Miss Robinson. He was anxious to get back to her. I don't know anything about Los Angeles, but you can bet he wouldn't have stayed there longer than it took to get a plane or a train to Santa Barbara if he wasn't held there somehow."

"I hope you're right. His social and financial prominence as the heir of Jonathan Steele causes the newspapers to gloat over this disgraceful tragedy. Well, I have clients waiting. You are at liberty to draw on this office for any part of your ten thousand dollars. It has been a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Cody."

I WAS bowed out. Maybe you won't believe me, but even in my low financial state I wasn't very joyful about the ten thousand dollars. I'd rather have had Steve alive.

Thinking it over, I was sure he had no premonition of death when he made that will. Just thoughtful enough to

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make provisions for his friends in case of an airplane accident.

Early that afternoon Bill Byron called me into his office. "Job for you, Cody," he said. "You are a presentable fellow, you can wear dress clothes and you don't murder the English language like most of my boys, and you've shown you have a head on your shoulders."

"Why all the salve, boss?" I asked with a grin.

Byron leaned back in his chair and lighted a cigar. He was a smart bird, a small man with little black eyes and a small black mustache. He had never been a flatfoot, couldn't come up to the physical requirements, but he was head of one of the most profitable detective agencies in New York.

"One of our best clients is the Steele Motor Corporation," he said. "It seems that this Robinson woman, who was supposed to be engaged to Stephen Steele, has been raising hell in Los Angeles. The company isn't proud of the way that boy passed out and it wants to get this rotten publicity out of the newspapers as quick as possible. They think they have found the murderer, and they'll hang him quick, and the quicker the better for the feelings of Jonathan Steele.

"Now this girl has been telling the reporters that there's something behind it. She is supplying the papers with ammunition. She went wild when old Steele refused to let her attend the funeral, which was private at his estate in Santa Barbara. She's on her way back on the Chief and when she gets here she'll supply the New York papers with a lot of crazy interviews. Of course she's an adventuress and, being an actress, has her eye on personal publicity—right?"

The little man didn't know how near he had come to being slugged. I wanted to hear it all, however, so I controlled myself after an angry mutter. But he enjoyed the sound of his own voice.

"Our client wants you to investigate this woman. No doubt there is plenty of dirt that can be dug up. Get a line on her and we'll make her shut her mouth."

My first impulse was to dive over the desk at him when he finished and grinned at me complacently, but I didn't. I'm no fool. So the Steele Motor Company proposed to disgrace Rhoda, did they? And I was to dig up the dirt. And, if I kicked myself out of the Byron Agency, some snake in the grass would get the Robinson assignment. I swallowed hard.

"What time does she get to town?" I asked gently.

"Arrives day after tomorrow about eight A.M. on the Twentieth Century. You can put in the time talking to the theater people. She jumped out on the rehearsals of her new show and they're all fit to be tied at the Preston Production offices. They'll probably be glad to tell all they know about her."

I rose. "Okay, chief," I said politely. After that I went into the men's room and washed my face and hands carefully.

I grinned after a while. It was funny to assign me to dig up dirt on Steve's fiancée, a girl that I admired more than anybody in the world. Stop her mouth, would they? We'd see about that.

When I came out the girl said Byron wanted to see me again.

"Cody," he said, "I've had Roscoe Patterson, President of Steele Motors, on the phone. He wants you to go down to his office and have a talk with him—right away."

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"Okay," I replied. "Sure, why not?"

"Try to make a good impression. I told him I was assigning my best man to the job."

Steele Motors has a forty story building on lower Broadway and uses two or three floors of it for offices. I hadn't been in the building since the time I rounded up the embezzling clerk for Patterson, but I remembered that his private offices were on the twenty-fourth floor.

"Oh, yes, you're expected," the girl at the information desk told me. "Sit down, please, you may have to wait a few minutes."

I SAT down and ran my eye over the place. It was one of those open offices, probably a hundred clerks and stenos working away in one huge room. It's what they call efficiency; enables an executive to look out and notice whose desk is vacant and go back and order the occupant fired. So many typewriters were clicking away it must have kept the clerks and auditors from thinking, but the efficiency experts didn't consider things like that.

"You may go in," said the girl. A uniformed page conducted me to the far corner of the great room and into the private office of the President. I'd been there before, so I wasn't impressed so much by the rich wood in the partitions and the Persian rug on the floor and the gigantic flat topped desk behind which his Nibs sat.

This Patterson was a big fellow with a mop of snow white hair, bushy black eyebrows, a large, slightly hooked nose and about the meanest mouth I ever saw on a man. He was in the habit of spending a week at the works in Detroit and a week in New York.

I knew he had started in life as a mechanic at the Plant, became superintendent, then production manager, then a vice-president and finally, when old Jonathan decided office work was too laborious, President of the Company. Of course, despite his title, he was still Jonathan's hired man because I knew from Steve that his grandfather owned three quarters of the stock.

He turned his hard gray eyes on me. "I've seen you before," he snapped.

"Yes, sir," I told him. "When I was a New York City detective I handled an embezzlement case—the Woodman case."

He almost smiled. "I remember. You did good work on that," he said. "The scoundrel got what he deserved. Take a chair, Mr. Cody. You are now with the Byron Private Agency."

I nodded. He pushed back his chair and eyed me sharply.

"Mr. Steele's grandson was killed under disgraceful conditions," he said in his crisp hard voice. "The papers are trying to make a nine days' wonder of it. They are making a scandal of it. We can't have it. Mr. Steele is ill from the shock of the affair. We want the matter dropped. There was an altercation about a mulatto woman. Her lover killed young Steele. They have the man and, in due time, they will hang him. That's all, nothing more."

He paused. I wasn't expected to answer, and said nothing.

"On the steamer coming from Europe Stephen met an actress, a woman with a shady past. No doubt she took that steamer to meet him. She set out to vamp him and succeeded. She claims he promised to marry her. She thrust herself into the affair in Los Angeles. She told the newspapers that young Steele's death was mysterious, that he

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was a youth of high moral character. That, if he went to this café in a disreputable district, he must have been drugged. That he was the victim of a conspiracy. Of course this is nonsense and very bad business.

"It keeps the affair open. The police out there have witnesses who saw him come into the café alone and engage in an altercation over a colored woman. I happen to know that he led a life of wild dissipation in Paris, Berlin and Geneva. His end was in keeping with his life. It's a closed book, and it must be kept closed."

This time I had to say something. I said, "Yes, sir."

"Your job is to close this woman's mouth," he said fiercely. He leaned forward and pointed his arm at me. "Get so much on her that she will be driven off the stage as a scarlet woman. She came up from the dregs. No doubt she had affairs with gangsters and racketeers. If Steele hadn't been insane he would have known better than to be mixed up with her. Work fast. I won't have our company held up to scorn by her mania for personal publicity. When she gets here you meet her at the train and tell her what will happen to her if she repeats any of her absurd accusations—"

"Just what accusations — against whom, Mr. Patterson?"

"Against anybody," he cried excitedly. "You would think she would be ashamed to have her name connected with that of a man who came to a shameful end, but she glories in it. Shut her mouth, Mr. Cody. And there is a thousand dollars bonus to you from this office if you get a signed agreement from her to make no further statement."

"To let the sleeping dogs lie," I remarked sourly.

"Just what do you mean by that?" he shouted.

Well, I admit that I made a fool of myself. I'd been smart with Byron. I'd sat here listening to Patterson vilify the two people that were my best friends on earth because I was wondering what the game was. But inside I was like a bottled up volcano, and I blew up.

"I mean you're perfectly satisfied to let the world think that Stephen Steele was a dirty dog," I shouted back at him. "And you'd ruin a decent girl to prevent her from expressing her opinion of a family that wanted the world to think that he was a skunk. Well, Mr. Patterson, you and Jonathan Steele and Bill Byron can go to the devil. Hire another detective to cover that girl with mud. And I've a damn good mind to bust your jaw."

And with that, I made a rush at him. Well, he had been punching buttons while I raved. In came a couple of bruisers. They pounced on me, caught my arms and dragged me toward the door.

"Listen, you rat," I howled as I was making my exit. "Let me read one nasty crack about Rhoda Robinson and I'll tell the papers every word of what you've just said to me."

"Kick him out," bellowed Patterson. "Throw him into the street. Here one of you get me the Byron Agency. I'll take our business away from them. How dare they send me a crazy man?"

They led me to an elevator and saw me start down it and I got my senses back and realized that I had made a fool of myself. I had been in a position to cover Rhoda. I'd have stalled along for a few days, dug up nothing. I knew that girl was a hundred per cent all the way and there was nothing to dig up. And in a few days the

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whole thing would have blown over. Some other crime would chase the Steele case out of the papers.

CHAPTER IV

Rhoda's Story

I WENT into a saloon and downed a drink of whisky. I'd made a mess and I had to clean it up. There would be dirty detectives on the job when the poor girl hit town, fellows that would swear black was white. My threat to him didn't mean a thing. No paper would pay the slightest attention to me.

By and by the old think-tank was working again and I walked around the corner to Mr. Reynolds' office. His office and the Steele Company's were that close. I had to wait a few minutes before I could see him.

"Well, young man, so soon?" he asked when I got inside.

"Mr. Reynolds," I said, "you mentioned that I could draw some cash."

"How much?"

"Five grand?"

"Ahem. The will, of course, must go through probate, young man. It may be months before you receive your legacy. I thought, if you needed a few hundred dollars, I would advance it. Why do you need so much money?"

"Mr. Reynolds," I said, "I knew Steve from the time he was nine until he was nineteen. You met him when you drew up the will. What was your impression of him?"

"I thought he was a very estimable young man."

"Can you conceive of his fighting with a buck negro over a girl in a dive in the black belt of Los Angeles?"

He looked shocked. "Most certainly not," he exclaimed. "I knew his mother, Mr. Cody."

"Well, that's what they claim out in Los Angeles. I am going to spend this money and as much more as I can get to prove that it's not true. There is something very queer behind all this. I've just had a talk with Patterson of the Steele Company. He's satisfied with the police reports and he wants them to stand. Well, I'm not, and I don't. I'm going out there."

He pulled his white side whiskers thoughtfully. "I am not on good terms with Mr. Patterson," he said slowly. "I once represented Jonathan Steele's interests. Since his retirement from the presidency, Patterson changed attorneys. He said I was an old fogy. Young man, I'll advance you five thousand dollars. You can draw on me up to the full amount."

"You're a trump," I shouted. "I beg your pardon, sir."

The old man was writing a check. "Never mind a receipt. The check will be sufficient. Permit me to shake hands with you, Mr. Cody. You don't look as if you could afford to spend your legacy upon an altruistic mission."

"I can't, sir, but I will."

"Shake hands, Mr. Cody."

I got up and had a thought. "Can you think of any reason why Patterson should be willing to let a filthy libel on a good man stand, sir?"

He pursed his lips. "Well, now, Jonathan had a horror of personal publicity. No doubt the spread in the newspapers about this wretched tragedy has infuriated him. Apparently he is convinced that it is the truth—this police report—so he wishes the affair to be forgotten as soon as possible. While Patterson is the president of the Company, he is still Jonathan's jackal. I can think of no other reason."

"Well, I'm much obliged, sir."

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YOU understand that I didn't have the slightest idea yet of what I was up against, of the interests that were lined up against an honest effort to clear a friend's name. I didn't know I was a marked man already and that my life wasn't safe. I didn't have any theory except that Steve hadn't gone voluntarily to that Los Angeles dive and hadn't become embroiled with a negro over a girl.

I was determined to pin the killing on the real murderer, but who he was or why Steve had been bumped off I didn't have any more idea than the man in the moon.

I cashed the check about a minute before closing time. As things worked out, it was exceedingly lucky I hadn't arrived there a minute later.

About seven thirty that night I was having griddlecakes and sausages at a café in Times Square, where I used to eat when I was on the Force. I was not surprised to see Detective Sergeant Cassidy when he came in and touched me on the shoulder. Cassidy and I had been pretty good friends in the old days and my gun had gone off in time to save him from getting a few ounces of lead in him from the revolver of a yegg, once on a time.

"How are you, Mike?" I said cordially. "Sit down. What will you have?"

"Nothing," said Mike very gravely. He sat down, however.

"Listen, Tim," he said, "I wouldn't spill this for anybody but you. You got a dirty deal and I know it."

"Spill what?"

"There's an order out to bring you in. Issued about five o'clock."

"Bring me in!" I gasped.

He nodded. "On account of that old matter. It seems they dropped you on suspicion, but evidence has turned up. You'll be jugged, tried and given a jail term, feller."

I turned pale, I suppose. "What evidence?" I exclaimed. "I wasn't guilty. I never took a bribe from anybody."

"But if a few stools swear they saw you take it, eh?"

"Okay, bring me in," I said sullenly. A frame-up, but what could I do?

"Who, me? I ain't seen you. Vamoose, feller. Good-by and good luck."

He got up and walked out of the restaurant. I wasn't hungry any more, so I went out a minute later.

That old business had been over and done with. The case against me had been so weak they hadn't dared to give me a hearing. They dropped me for the good of the department and let it go at that. What had brought the matter up again?

I was so dumb that I had walked three blocks before I figured out the cause of it all. After I'd ripped into Patterson and had been chucked out, he had called Byron. Byron, of course, was crazy with rage. Byron knew my police record. And it looked as if Patterson had had drag enough to have the old charge revived and sweetened.

As I turned into my own street I realized that a plainclothes man would be waiting for me in front of Mrs. Murphy's home. Well, I hadn't yet settled for my rent, but the junk in my room could be sold for more than enough to pay her bill.

Turning back to Broadway, I went into a telegraph office and wired Rhoda to wait over in Chicago—that I'd meet her at the Congress Hotel. Rhoda had to be told what was being cooked up for her in New York. And, as the big town was too hot to hold me, and as I had large money in my pocket, after talking things over with Miss Robinson, I'd go on to California and learn

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what really had happened to poor old Steve.

After that I taxied up to Yonkers and took a local train for Albany. For all I knew, the police might be looking for me at the Grand Central Station. There was a Chicago Express in the Albany station when my train pulled in, and I bought a berth and boarded it. At seven thirty the second morning I was waiting at the railroad station when the train pulled in. If I missed Rhoda I'd pick her up at the Congress Hotel. You see, I wasn't sure she would stop over as I had asked her to do in the telegram.

RHODA was one of the first off the train and she recognized me before I saw her. It was because she was in black and wore a black veil. The first I knew she rushed into my arms.

"Tim, oh, darling Tim!" she wailed.

I'd seen several reporters and camera men hanging round, and figured they were laying for her, so I put an arm around her little waist and whisked her to a taxi.

Because she was an actress the newspaper boys had assumed they would have no trouble interviewing her and taking her picture, and we got away ridiculously easy.

In the taxi she laid her head on my shoulder and cried like a child. "It's been horrible, horrible," she sobbed. "Why did you want me to stop over, Tim? I've got to get back to work. I've held up the show for a week. I owe the people in the cast something, you know."

"You're out of that show. You're not going back to New York," I told her. "I'll explain why later."

She shook her head. "I must work or I'll go insane."

"Well, we'll talk it over."

The cab arrived at the Congress Hotel and the porter took her bags and we walked into the lobby. "We'll both get rooms," I said. "I'll take a suite because we've got to talk about a lot of things."

As she registered, a red-faced, important looking person stepped up to her.

"Miss Robinson," he said. "I am Mr. Frothingham, Chicago representative of the Jonathan Steele interests. I had a wire to offer you our services."

"Thank you. I want nothing from the Jonathan Steele interests," she said coldly.

"But, Miss Robinson—"

"You heard what the young lady said, Mister," I said sharply.

He scowled at me. "Who the devil are you?" he demanded.

"This is my very dear friend and the friend of the late Stephen Steele, Mr. Cody," said Rhoda haughtily. "I wish to go to my room."

"And that will be all, Mr. Frothingham," I told him and sort of gave him the shoulder.

He stepped back and scowled more fiercely than before, but he said nothing, and we went up to the eighth floor. They put Rhoda's suitcase in her room and then I took her into the parlor of the suite which was across the hall.

"It's wonderful of you, Tim," she said, "after the way I treated you, but when I received a long distance telephone call from the Los Angeles police telling—telling me—" She burst into tears again.

"Forget it, kid," I said uncomfortably.

"I only thought of getting there as soon as possible."

"Of course the reports of the cir-

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cumstances of his death are all wrong—"

"Of course they are. Steve wasn't like that. You know it, Tim."

"You bet."

"They were awful to me out there. They asked me the most offensive questions. They insinuated that I took the steamer especially to meet him; that I hooked him. His grandfather's secretary was horrible."

I made a mental note of that.

"And they wouldn't let me go to the f-f-funeral. I went to Santa Barbara and they turned me away from the gates of his grandfather's estate. Two men forcibly put me on the train back to Los Angeles. I might have been a criminal." She wiped away her tears.

"Rhoda, it was Steve all right? You identified the—er—body?"

"How could I? When I arrived all the formalities had been complied with and identification and cause of death established, and they had taken Steve to Santa Barbara. I phoned to Santa Barbara, to his grandfather, and was told he was ill and could see nobody. I talked with his secretary and said I was coming up to attend the funeral. He said, in the nastiest way, that only relatives would be present—that he didn't believe I had been engaged to Steve. 'Mr. Steele told me to say'—I quote his words—'that this adventuress must not be recognized in any way. I'm sorry, Miss Robinson, but you must understand the situation.' 'I'm coming to Santa Barbara. I insist upon seeing Steve,' I cried, and he hung up on me."

I swore under my breath.

"REPORTERS kept coming to see me and, naturally, I told them about the treatment I had received and that I didn't believe that Steve had done the things in Los Angeles that they said he had. And I was frightfully angry and I suppose I was indiscreet. Oh, Tim, I'm so unhappy."

"So they don't believe that you were engaged to him," I remarked. "Rhoda, they'll change their minds about that. Steve made his will before he took the plane. He left you his mother's estate all except ten thousand dollars. He left that to me. To me, whom he hadn't seen for years."

Her eyes grew misty. "I don't want his money, but it was wonderful of him. Tim, do you think he knew he was going to die?"

"No. People often make their wills before taking a long airplane trip. I'm on my way to California. I'll clear his name—"

She rocked from side to side.

"What does it matter? He's dead. I'll never see him again."

I gazed at her uneasily. I hardly dared say what I wanted to.

"What's troubling you?" she asked sharply.

"A lot of things. Rhoda, if you had identified that body, I'd give in. If you'd seen him in the coffin, that would settle it. But until it's absolutely proved, I'm not admitting that it was Steve who was killed in that den in Los Angeles."

She stared at me wildly.

"I'm not wanting to raise false hopes," I said dubiously. "The whole thing is a mystery to me."

"Tim," she screamed, "do you think there's a chance—a possible chance?"

"I didn't until I found out that they wouldn't let you see him. Of course, that might be old Jonathan's meanness. He hated cards and liquor and the stage. But they knew you and Steve were engaged. The police had

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a letter to prove it. They treated you so badly that it's suspicious."

The sun came out on Rhoda's pretty face. "Tim," she cried, "I want to believe—I'm going to. Oh, Tim, find him for me."

"I'm going to do my best," I said solemnly. "I've drawn five grand of my legacy. I'll spend the other half."

"And every dollar I have in the world!" she exclaimed. "Only I don't understand why—"

"I've other reasons for being suspicious. It ought to be possible to exhume the body—"

"Tim, they had him c-c-c-cremated." She burst into tears again.

"And that's suspicious. Now, Rhoda, this is why you have to watch your step." I told her about Patterson and the filthy plot in New York.

"But why should they persecute me whether Steve is dead and whether he isn't?" she gasped.

I shook my head, puzzled. "The thing to do is to be discreet. We're up against something very peculiar. I'm going to write a statement for you to sign that will save you from trouble, and maybe help us work this out. You will say that you are sorry if any statements of yours caused publicity offensive to the Jonathan Steele interests. Since Mr. Steele's will has proved conclusively you were his fiancée, you are as eager as they are to keep further discussion of his strange death out of the newspapers."

"I won't sign any such thing, after their treatment of me," she said indignantly.

"You will, and I'll mail it to Patterson. They'll let you alone. You go back to the show. You need work. I don't dare tell you to hope."

"You don't have to," she said eagerly. "And I'll sign."

"I'm pulling out now. I'll take the next plane to the coast."

"You've saved my sanity, Tim. I want to kiss you."

Well, I had the most delicious sensation of my life. It was a life that hadn't had girls in it much. She decided to go on to New York and promised to refuse to make any statement to the reporters there, and I witnessed her statement, sealed it in an envelope and dropped it in the hotel mail chute. It would surprise Patterson to get it with my name as witness after what I had told him in his office.

Part of my load of grief had dropped off me when I left Rhoda at the door of her room and went down and checked out of my suite after having occupied it only an hour.

CHAPTER V

The Gunman

WITH five grand in my jeans, the five dollars for the suite didn't trouble me any. Of course I knew that it was a hundred to one that poor old Steve was dead and in his grave, but while there was a hundredth of a chance I'd not wear crape for him.

But if Steve wasn't dead, who had kindly impersonated him and got his throat cut? And if the dead body wasn't Steve's, why had the Steele estate buried somebody in his name? And what was it all about anyway?

I went into the bar and downed a quick one and then went out of the hotel and walked half a block toward the Loop. A man came out of a doorway suddenly and almost bumped into me. He stared.

"Say," he exclaimed, "ain't you Tim Cody?"

I gave him the old fake smile that

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you pull when you don't want to ritz somebody that you don't recognize but who may be an old friend.

"Sure," I said, and gave him the once over. When a man's been a cop and worked up to taking off the harness and going in "cits" he either gets hunches or instincts or he don't last long. And I knew this was no former acquaintance as soon as I gave him a gander.

And I sensed rather than heard somebody come up close behind me. This fellow had stuck out his right hand like a hotel greeter. I grabbed it, seized his elbow with my left and swung him round between me and the fellow I thought was right behind. And sure enough he was.

And his right hand was inside his coat and it was coming out.

Slam went the greeter, square into him. He toppled backwards. I fetched the old pal a terrific kick and I was on the other guy as the automatic came out. He fired a couple of shots, but they were headed for the blue sky—and then I twisted the gun out of his hand, swung him around and gave him the boot. He went flying a dozen feet.

I looked around. Pedestrians were scurrying in all directions. People who were coming out of doorways ran back into them. Automobiles coming down and up the street and jammed on their brakes when the first shot was fired and traffic had come to a full stop. I was alone in a wide cleared space except for my boy friends who were taking it on the lam.

Now a cop came out of the doorway into which he had run when the war started to break out.

From long training, people in Chicago know what to do when bullets begin to fly.

"What's the matter with you?" asks this cop. "Why didn't you plug them? You had the gun and you could have drilled 'em."

"Not in that business, brother," I said with a grin. "So you know what happened."

"I saw you get the gun away from him," he admitted. "Well, let's stroll down to the station. Reckernize either of them?"

"Couple of strangers to me. I haven't been in Chi for years, and I only got in an hour ago from New York."

He gave me a side glance. "New York dick?" he asked.

"Nope. Business man."

"Why did they try to spot you?"

Feeling I had to give him some kind of yarn, I said, "Well, I was in the hotel bar back there and I suppose they got a look at my wad. I've considerable cash on me."

"Well, we'll make a report. Just a matter of formality. I thought maybe you were a 'G'-man. You worked fast, feller."

"Instead of bothering with me, why didn't you chase 'em?"

"Aw, they were lost in the crowd."

While I was pretty well convinced that he knew who they were and what gang they belonged to, I didn't say any more. Even in New York policemen know it's good business to lay off certain criminals because they have an "in" downtown, and from what I've heard of Chicago, things were pretty bad.

In the station house I told my tale, turned in the captured gun and shook hands all around. The general impression was that I was a G-man, and naturally wouldn't admit it. The cop had told how I handled the pair and it sounded pretty professional at the station house.

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I went into an aviation office in the Loop, found I could get a California plane in two hours and decided that the airport would be a safe place for yours truly. Besides, I wanted to make some inquiries there. Steve had changed planes at Chicago to go on to Los Angeles.

Now the truth was that I hadn't flashed a wad in the hotel bar. I paid for my drink with small change. And I had been in Chicago but once before when I came on from New York to bring a prisoner back and had spent only an hour in the town. I'd never set eyes on the two bozos who jumped me, but they knew my name.

So I added what I guessed to what I knew and concluded that the Jonathan Steele Company's nice Mr. Frothingham had sicked them on me.

It was probable that somebody had been on the Chief to keep an eye upon the troublesome Miss Robinson and that somebody had bought a look at my telegram to her. And Mr. Patterson had been wired and knew that I was meeting Rhoda to tip her off of the plot against her. Which explained Mr. Frothingham meeting us at the hotel.

So it had reached a point where Mr. Patterson thought it was a good idea to have Tim Cody scragged since he had failed to get him jailed in New York. And there probably would be a reception committe awaiting Tim Cody in Los Angeles.

All of which indicated to me that the Jonathan Steele Company was protecting more than the delicate sensibilities of old Jonathan, who hated publicity so badly. For the first time I realized what I was up against. The Steele interests wouldn't stop at murder to prevent further investigation of the circumstances leading to the death of Steve Steele in Los Angeles. One man and a girl against half a billion dollars, and a countrywide and, evidently, unscrupulous organization.

Reynolds had stated that Patterson was Jonathan's jackal. I wondered if it wasn't that Jonathan, being eighty-two years old, might not be Patterson's stooge. I couldn't believe the old man would stand for the murder of his grandson's friend and the vilification of the girl who had been engaged to his dead grandson.

I had bought my ticket on the plane under the name of Peter Anderson, the first name that came into my mind. I took a taxi to the field and, in the waiting room, wrote a long air mail letter to Mr. Reynolds. I told him about the revived charges against me at Police Headquarters, told him about the plot against Miss Robinson and the steps I had taken to call off Patterson's dogs, and said I was on my way to Los Angeles. I didn't tell him of my hunch Steve might be alive because it seemed too ridiculous.

After that I made a few cautious inquiries in the airplane office. The Steele murder case was still being discussed, and it was easy to bring up. Nobody in the office remembered him, but I learned something that pleased me. I was going out with the same plane crew which had carried Steve Steele to Los Angeles a little more than a week before.

During the long wait I kept my eyes open. It wasn't at all impossible that I had been traced by whomever was interested in my movements to the airport. However, when it came time to go, I hadn't been interfered with at all.

So, for the first time in my life, I climbed into an airplane. I wasn't afraid, but I admit I was nervous.

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However, the size of the machine, its trio of motors, the spaciousness of the cabin and the character of the passengers calmed me down. Flying had come to be pretty near as safe as railroading. Steve, certainly, had not been killed in the air, but after he landed on the ground. I'd come close to being snuffed out that morning on the ground, so why should I be afraid of the air?

I had one of the rear seats, and, as the plane was only half full, there was nobody within two rows of me.

I suppose I turned pale when we took off and I grabbed the back of the seat in front of me with both hands and clutched them so tightly my knuckles turned white. I heard a giggle, but I held on until we stopped climbing and then I looked around. She smiled—a very pretty smile.

"Everybody feels that way the first time," she remarked.

"Oh, detective, eh?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "The symptoms are obvious."

She went forward to do something for the old lady, came back and sat down opposite me. She caught me looking at her and half-smiled.

"All right," I said. "It's the first time—but I'm beginning to like it."

"Of course. Everybody does. That old lady has traveled with me five times."

"I had a friend come out on one of these planes about ten days ago. Name of Stephen Steele."

Her eyes grew big. "A friend of yours?" she exclaimed. "You mean the man who was killed in Los Angeles?"

I nodded. "He and I went to school together up in Providence, Rhode Island. I saw him off on the plane from New York with his fiancée."

"I remember him. He traveled out to Los Angeles with us," she said.

"Really? What did you think of him?"

"Well, I—er—I wouldn't have thought he was that kind of man."

"Talk with him?"

"Only a few words. He said he had traveled by plane all over Europe. I'd love to go to Europe."

"Who wouldn't? Was there anybody with him?"

"No, I don't think so. Oh, there was a gentleman named Blake, with whom he got acquainted on the trip. I think he was connected with the Jonathan Steele Company. We carry a lot of Jonathan Steele men east and west."

"Know his first name?"

"Parker B. Blake. I've had him on my plane often."

"Your plane?" I said with a grin.

"Well, one gets to think like that. After all, I'm the only one in the crew who gets around among the passengers. Excuse me." She went forward because one of the traveling men had rung a bell.

I looked out at the clouds and the ground below, which resembled a raised map, and thought about various things.

So a Jonathan Steele man had boarded Steve's plane and gotten acquainted with him. Name of Parker B. Blake. I'd find out in Los Angeles something about Mr. Blake.

As an investigator I would have no standing in Los Angeles. I hadn't even a New York private detective's license. If the L. A. police got interested in me and wired New York, New York headquarters would give me a black eye. I'd have to work strictly under cover.

One thing I knew. That Steve had intended to go directly to his grand-

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father's home in Santa Barbara upon his arrival in Los Angeles. I knew how eager he was to see the old man, to get his conference over with and hop back to New York and Rhoda. Somebody had held him over two days in Los Angeles. I wondered if it could have been Parker B. Blake.

But there were others beside Parker B. Blake who were to make Tim Cody wonder. At Los Angeles, gangsters who already knew he was flying to the Coast were waiting to give Tim a surprise party. How deeply will Tim become involved in the scandal that rocked the nation? Is Rhoda Robinson really the adventuress that Jonathan Steele thinks she is? More mystery and thrills in the second installment! Continue this story next week.

Cipher Solvers' Club for June

(Continued from Last Week)

Cryptograms are intriguing miniature mysteries! And interest in them is ever increasing! As evidence of this, please witness that our readers sent us 5,501 answers to ciphers Nos. 133-56, inclusive, published in our cipher department during June, raising our grand total for the year to 37,128 answers! Your name is listed below if you sent us one or more answers to the June Cryptograms. The asterisks indicate Inner Circle Club members, who have individual records of 1,000 or more solutions. The Cipher Solvers' Club for July will be published soon. Watch for it! And send us one or more answers to this week's ciphers!

Eleven—Mrs. Patricia Hall, Lagrange, Tex.; J. C. Schock, New York, N. Y.; E. Smith, New York, N. Y.

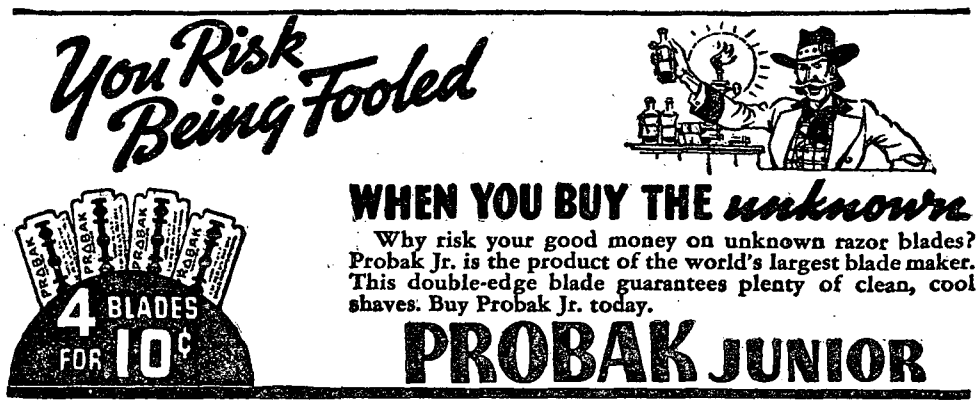
Ten—Alpha Bet, Merchantville, N. J.; Duke d'Ekud, Bronx, N. Y.; Al. Liston, Newark, N. J.; N. A. O., Brooklyn, N. Y.; Jerry Phelan, Bronx, N. Y.; Ex-Sgt., Ossining, N. Y.; Will Will, White Plains, N. Y.

Nine—Stephen Barabas, New York, N. Y.; Mabs, Baltimore, Md.; Walter Mason, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Octogenarian, Fancy Prairie, Ill.; Pangram, Lakewood, Ohio; Mrs. J. C. Saunders, Vallejo, Calif.

Six—Bob Ariola, E. St. Louis, Ill.; Farmer Dot, Perry, N. Y.; W. R. G., Maywood, Ill.; Mary Alice Haller, Matoaka, W. Va.; Illy, Akron, Ohio; Mrs. S. L. Johnson, Ocala, Fla.; *Kriptobens, Hope, N. Mex.; Harold W. Pickard, San Diego, Calif.; Bob-on-the-Road, Dayton, Ohio; Mrs. Alvin Schisler, Croton-on-Hudson, N. Y.; Segro, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Sibli, Jamaica Plain, Mass.; C. P. Snively, Long Beach, Calif.; Ty N. Twist, London, Ontario, Canada; W90JZ, Bisbee, Ariz.

Five—Margaret Chamberlain, Buffalo, N. Y.; Curtis Christensen, Chicago, Ill.; Mrs. Ethel Gratrix Cookson, Winthrop, Me.; D. R. Eason, Grand Rapids, Mich.; J. A. G., Philadelphia, Pa.; Robert S. Hanson, Kenosha, Wis.; Mrs. L. R. Hilliard, Seattle, Wash.; Kappa Kappa, Seattle, Wash.; Morris Levine, Pampa, Tex.; Fannie M. Price, Albany, N. Y.; Patrick Ryan, Brooklyn, N. Y.; GeeKaSee, Seattle, Wash.; Mrs. B. C. Squires, Thomaston, Conn.; Chi Valor, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada; Loula Williams, Stockton, Calif.

(Continued on Page 120)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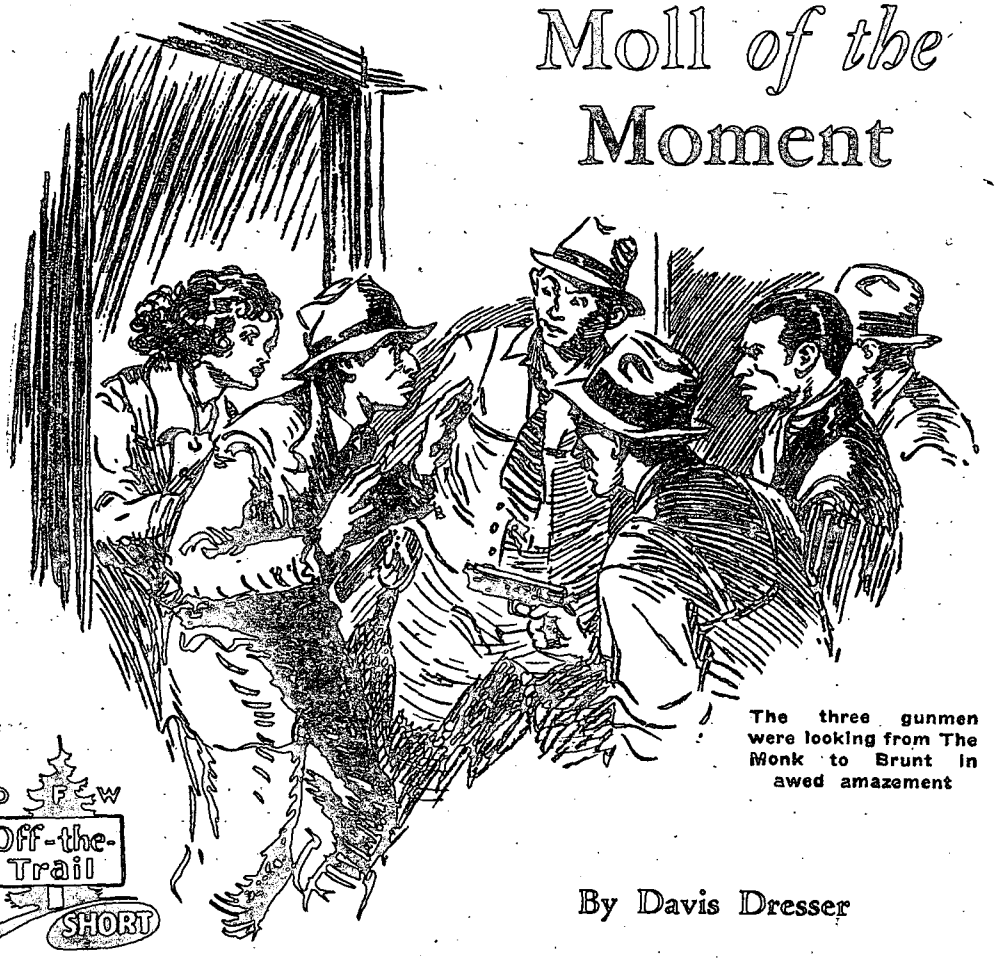

The three gunmen were looking from The Monk to Brunt in awed amazement

By Davis Dresser

HE was a timid-appearing little man about five feet five with sloping shoulders and a stringy body. But his eyes! There all that was timid about him vanished in a fervid glow that burned in their gray depths. You had to look deeply to see it. But you forgot all about his air of timidity when you saw that light.

Police Commissioner Joshua Martin had not bothered to look deeply. He was in an irritable mood. Theodore Brunt was a taxpayer, and the Commissioner had listened very patiently to Brunt's request.

"I'm extremely sorry." The commissioner waved a heavy hand. "Your plan is wholly unorthodox. We can't consider it."

"But I'm asking you to assume no responsibility." Brunt's voice was in keeping with his air of timidity. "I'm prepared to leave a statement exonerating the police from any—"

"Can't think of it," Martin said. Brunt stood before his desk in an atti-

A Sheep in Wolf's Clothing—and a Rat Dressed Like a Man—Look Just Alike to the Moll of the Moment

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tude which exemplified utter despair.

"I've planned it so carefully, sir. I'm exactly The Monk's size and build, and I look enough like him to be his brother. A plastic surgeon has declared he can make the resemblance perfect."

"No!" the commissioner roared. "I won't countenance the use of the Department as an instrument of personal revenge. We'll get The Monk, and we'll get him right."

"Do you refuse to even give me a letter of introduction to the Federal men, sir?" Theodore Brunt asked. "All I ask is an opportunity to put my proposition before them."

"*No!*" The irate commissioner's fist thudded down on the desk. Theodore Brunt sighed and made his way out of the office. It had taken every ounce of influence he possessed to gain the police commissioner's ear. He could do no more.

A little trickle of rage spread through him as he swayed on a street-car strap. No one would listen to him. If he could get to the Federal men with his plan he believed the outcome would be different. They weren't tied up with crooked politics. The Monk was now at the head of their Public Enemy list.

His name had been placed there after a daylight bank robbery in this city, after The Monk and his henchmen fled the scene leaving one dead and one dying.

The dying man had been Herman Brunt. He died in Theodore's arms half an hour later. The strange, fervid light had been kindled in Theodore Brunt's eyes while he whispered a last promise to his brother.

A single, iron purpose had entered his soul that day. If he could only get to the G-Men! He shook his head dejectedly. They'd probably laugh at him, too.

HE got off the street car in a neighborhood of modest apartment buildings, and walked to the Gramercy with bowed head, thinking deeply. He murmured apologies to people who bumped into him as he walked along.

At the Gramercy, he walked up to his neat second-floor apartment and let himself in with a latchkey. Silence hung over the apartment like a pall. It had prevailed for a month. His brother had shared the apartment with him until a month ago. Both had been bachelors, and had been very close to each other.

He went to an oblong table before the window with a faint sigh. There was a neatly arranged pile of newspaper clippings on one side of the table, the accumulation of a month. Each clipping dealt with some phase of The Monk's murderous career.

A large cardboard placard lay beside the clippings. Bold lettering proclaimed the offer of a $3,000.00 reward for The Monk. His photographs covered the placard. Most of them had been taken three years ago while he was beating the rap for a newsboy's murder.

Brunt picked up the placard with both hands, as though he lifted a heavy weight. He held it before him and studied the familiar features of his brother's murderer.

He knew it was no trick of the imagination that he seemed to peer at his own reflection. The lips were a trifle fuller than his, the forehead more sloping. There was a scar on The Monk's left cheek, and the pictured nose was minutely off-center. Plastic

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surgery could alter all differences in a few days.

Brunt laid the placard down, turned, and stared across the room at a framed portrait of his murdered brother. It seemed to him that the eyes were accusatory.

He winced; wanted to cry out to his brother that he had done his best; that no one would listen to him; that they considered him mad to suggest impersonating The Monk in the hope of contacting and trapping him.

He did not cry these things out to his brother. He strode over and confronted the framed portrait. There was nothing timid about him as he stood there. He said aloud:

"I'll not give up, Herman. I'm going to keep that promise I made you. They'll have to listen. I'll get to the G-Men somehow. I'll prove to them that I'm not crazy."

II

TWO weeks later, Theodore Brunt again entered his second-floor apartment. He carried a folded newspaper in one hand. The apartment had a stale, musty odor. He laid the newspaper down, opened a window, took up the reward placard and went into the bedroom to face the triple mirrors there.

Meticulously, he compared his new reflection from the three angles with the killer's photographs.

His lips were now as full as The Monk's; his forehead sloped in the same measure; an identical scar stood out boldly on his left cheek; his nose was just as minutely off-center as was The Monk's.

The plastic surgeon had done his work well. No man could have said that the reflection in the glass was not The Monk.

Unless they looked deep into his eyes. Light gray—like The Monk's—there was a subtle difference. The Monk's eyes were cold, the eyes of a cold-blooded killer who enjoys his trade.

Theodore Brunt's eyes still held the fervid glow that had been born in them when his brother lay there dying in his arms.

He laid the placard down, went back to the living room and unfolded the newspaper. Front-page headlines told of The Monk's flight from a Kansas City hide-out last night less than an hour before G-Men raided the place. The item stated that he was believed to have fled into Missouri.

An hour later Theodore Brunt was on board a train bound for a small city in Missouri less than a hundred miles from Kansas City. He wore dark glasses and a clerical collar; limping, stoop-backed, with the aid of a cane. He had procured the disguise from a theatrical outfitter.

He arrived in Grainger at four o'clock that afternoon, a bustling little city of ten thousand inhabitants, none of whom paid the slightest attention to a limping clergyman.

He taxied to a second-class hotel, signed his full name to the register, limped out to reconnoiter. He found the sort of place he sought less than two blocks from the hotel.

The Ideal Beer Parlor and Café was ideal for his purpose. There was a bar near the front, small, untidy tables in the rear. Uncouth men were congregated at the bar.

Brunt limped back to the hotel, buying a five-cent pad of writing paper on the way. In the security of his room, he straightened his back with a groan and went through a series of limbering exercises. Then he composed an

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anonymous note in a school-boy scrawl:

> Have G-Men come to Ideal Beer Parlor and Café at eight tonight if they want The Monk. Keep local police off because they are in cahoots with The Monk and will tip him off. LAW AND ORDER.

He put the communication in a cheap envelope, addressed it to the editor of the local paper, marked it "URGENT," took up his cane and went out.

Half a block from the newspaper office, he selected a moment when there were no passers-by to remove his glasses, straighten his back and lay his cane in the grass. Then he hurried to the newsboy on the corner and handed him a dollar bill and the envelope.

"Take this in to the editor, son. It's important."

The boy took bill and envelope, wide-eyed. Brunt whirled about and retraced his steps. The boy stared after him a moment, then sprinted up the steps to the editor's office. Unobserved, Brunt replaced his glasses, retrieved his cane, and limped back to the hotel.

HE stayed in the seclusion of his room until six o'clock, nerving himself for the coming ordeal. He calculated it would be impossible for the Federal men to reach Grainger before seven, but he wished to make sure and be at the Ideal before they came. It was imperative that they have every chance to make one of their celebrated pick-ups "without a shot being fired."

He left cane, glasses, clerical collar, and limp behind him when he went out. He wore a shabby gray suit and an old slouch hat.

With hat-brim pulled well down on his brow, he walked swiftly to the Ideal and went to a rear table. Selecting a seat half-facing the door, he ordered beer and began practicing looking like a hunted desperado who hasn't the slightest idea that G-Men are on his trail.

He kept his hat on, turned up his coat collar, assumed a slightly furtive air, glancing up quickly and then away nervously each time the front door opened.

An hour and a half passed swiftly. Then tingles began to chase themselves up and down his spine. The Feds had arrived. They were closing in. Drifting casually into the Ideal singly and in twos and threes. Hard-eyed, calm-featured men. Mostly in their thirties. Casually disinterested in the man at the rear table.

Two of them seated themselves directly behind Brunt. Another sat on his right. Two others blocked his path to the door. Others loitered at the bar.

Brunt drank his beer and waited. As the G-Men came in, the other customers departed. They were damned clever about clearing the room without appearing to do so, Brunt thought appreciatively. He couldn't catch a signal nor hear a spoken word from any of them.

But the room was cleared. Increasing tensity pervaded the atmosphere. Brunt finished his beer and waited.

A heavy, florid-faced man appeared in the doorway. His glance drifted over the room, settled on Brunt.

He moved toward him purposefully. Brunt's heart pounded. He was careful to keep both his hands in plain sight.

The heavy man stopped in front of him. The others pressed in. Brunt drained his beer mug.

The heavy man said: "All right,

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Monk. Don't move a finger. It'll be suicide."

Brunt stammered: "Sir? I—I don't understand." He made a motion to rise. Men closed in on him. Each wrist was cuffed to that of a G-Man as he continued his unheeded protestations.

No one listened to him. He was the center of a little procession of impassive men that filed out of the Ideal, taxied to the airport, and took a chartered plane to Kansas City.

III

IT was after midnight when Brunt, handcuffed and heavily guarded, was brought into the presence of the heavy, florid-faced chief in the F.B.I. headquarters in Kansas City.

Federal Agent Grimes slowly got to his feet. He looked as though he had eaten something that had disagreed with him. He said curtly to his men:

"Take the hardware off him. And all of you may go."

Brunt straightened with a sigh of relief as handcuffs were unlocked and his guards filed out.

Grimes held out a heavy hand and said slowly: "I have an apology to make—Theodore Brunt. On behalf of the Government, my men, and myself."

Brunt took his hand and shook it effusively. "That's quite all right," he faltered. "Indeed, that is quite all right, sir."

"Sit down." Grimes indicated a chair and they both sat. "We've checked every detail of your story. I just received the report on your prints. It conclusively checks your identity." He pressed a hand wearily to his brow. "This is going to be difficult. Your resemblance to The Monk is the most extraordinary thing I've ever witnessed."

Brunt leaned forward, his eyes blazing into those of the federal agent. This was the moment long awaited; the opportunity he had connived to bring about. His voice became hard, staccato, breathing certitude and a measure of defiance:

"I'm the one who should apologize. I shan't. I don't care. I sent the anonymous note that brought you to Grainger. I had to reach you somehow; had to prove that the devil himself wouldn't know me from The Monk if I happened to go down to hell in his place."

Grimes stiffened to attention. He held a cigar poised toward his lips. He laid the cigar down and said flatly: "Go on."

Brunt went on in his new, incisive voice that commanded respect. He told about his brother's murder by The Monk; his carefully thought-out plan for impersonating the mobster in hopes of attracting the attention of the gang; about his unsuccessful conference with Police Commissioner Martin; his decision to try and enlist the interest of Federal men; the surgical operations he had undergone; and finally he told Federal Agent Grimes in detail how he had planned the Grainger coup and put it in execution.

Grimes heard him out without interruption. He was pacing the floor when Brunt concluded with a plea for Federal aid in putting his plan into execution.

He continued to pace the floor several minutes after Brunt ceased speaking. Then flung his heavy body into a chair and savagely chewed an unlit cigar.

"What do you want us to do?"

"I need all the private information you have on The Monk, his associates, his haunts. I want to do what people

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who know The Monk expect him to do."

Grimes shook his head slowly. "That's the wrong angle. Your one chance to accomplish anything is to hang around where The Monk will hear about you. If you should contact him that way . . . what could you do?"

"I don't know," Brunt cried fiercely. "I'll find a way. It's worth trying at least."

Grimes studied him soberly. He said: "I'll be hanged if I don't believe it is."

"Thank God!" Brunt gulped back his eagerness as Grimes held up his hand.

"The F.B.I. can take no part in this mad plan. You'll be on your own. I'll assign men to cover you, try to pull a raid in time to save you if you reach The Monk. That's all I can do. But . . . there's a three grand reward for The Monk."

Brunt drew himself up to his full five inches above five feet and spoke with dignity: "There is a larger reward awaiting my success, sir."

"So?"

"The fulfillment of a promise I made my brother a few seconds before he died."

Agent Grimes nodded soberly. There was something grotesquely magnificent about the little man's sincerity. He laid his hand on Brunt's shoulder and squeezed it hard. "I believe you. You'll have your chance."

"I'll see that you don't regret it."

Grimes sat down and took a file of papers from his desk. "Here is every iota of information we possess on The Monk. Better familiarize yourself with it." He leaned back and locked his hands together, going on slowly: "We have reason to believe our man is still in the city. We have a pretty good idea of the section he's in. His moll of the moment happens to be a red-head. That's all we know?"

"His what?" Brunt looked up in surprise.

"His moll of the moment," Grimes repeated. "The Monk is smarter than most hot-shots. He picks up a new girl friend every time he moves. Generally selects a young kid who doesn't know what she's getting into. That's why he's so hard to get a line on. He leaves them behind, either dead or in a shape that's little better."

"I see." Brunt wet his lips.

"Better study this data tonight." Grimes pushed the file toward him. "Tomorrow, be ready to go out on the most dangerous assignment a man ever asked for. And may God go with you."

Brunt murmured, "Thank you," already deep in a perusal of the F.B.I. file on The Monk.

THE next afternoon a little man in a shabby gray suit and an old slouch hat was very much in evidence about one of Kansas City's suburban shopping centers. He seemed to have no particular business, contenting himself with strolling aimlessly about, drinking a glass of beer here, a soft drink there; visiting outlying grocery stores for a pack of cigarettes or a stale cigar; standing for long intervals on the curb where he was a conspicuous figure among the throngs of bargain-hunting housewives.

It was to this section of modest homes and low-rent apartments that the G-Men believed The Monk had fled when routed from his downtown retreat. They had been tipped that he and three of his mob were hiding out in an apartment while the red-head

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ventured out to do their shopping for them.

Brunt was trying to put himself in the way of the red-head. His plans went no further than that. Grimes had assigned a dozen men to cover the district. They were unknown to him, but he knew he was under constant surveillance.

Nothing happened that first afternoon. Brunt saw two red-headed shoppers. Neither was the right one.

He kept up his vigil until ten o'clock that night, was out at nine the next morning. Nothing happened through noon and past. Nothing happened until five o'clock.

Then he saw the red-head. He met her face to face as she came out of a self-service grocery with a heavy basket on her arm.

She gasped and shrank back. Every vestige of color fled from her rather pretty face, leaving it piteously white save for smears of rouge on cheeks and lips. She stared at him with her lips working queerly, stark terror in her eyes.

Brunt stared back, wondering what the devil to do next. She solved the problem for him by coming forward, wobbly-kneed, gasping in a low tone:

"Monk! Has something happened?"

"I'm afraid you've made a mistake. I don't believe I know you." Brunt marveled at his own self-possession.

She was grasping his sleeve excitedly, staring into his eyes. Doubt came into her face; then dismay and rising terror.

She turned away stammering and hurried down the street without a backward glance as though pursued by a thousand devils.

Brunt's knees were trembling with savage exultation. He decided against following her. A waiting game was best. She would be back. He knew she would be back.

Two drunken bums had witnessed the little scene with interest. One of them lurched off after the girl. The other loitered near Brunt.

The one who had followed the girl came back presently. They conversed together in low tones, then stumbled up to Brunt.

He recognized one as a G-Man who had participated in the Grainger fiasco. "We've got the building," he muttered to Brunt. "We'll have it surrounded. If she takes you to The Monk . . . wave your handkerchief out the apartment window. We'll wait for the signal." The two men lurched away, arguing loudly about the respective fighting ability of Louis and Braddock.

The red-head did not return until dusk. Her young shoulders drooped and she carried herself with a pathetically furtive air.

Brunt moved into her path. He saw a shudder pass over her body when she saw him. A flash of intuition told him she had hoped he would not be there, that she had prayed to whatever strange Gods she revered that she would not find him.

But she came up to him bravely enough, forcing a smile of bravado to her red lips. "You wanta make some dough?" Her young face was upturned to him, her slight body pressed against his. The aroma of cheap perfume drifted from red curls saucily escaping a saucy tam.

"I'll say I do." He made his voice sound eager. "Things have been tough lately."

"C'mon with me." Thin fingers were on his coat sleeve, tugging.

He went with her wordlessly, alert but queerly unfrightened. Soon he

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would stand face to face with his brother's murderer. This thought crowded all others out of his mind.

She led him three blocks to an apartment house. It was growing darker. He saw nothing to indicate that the building was surrounded, but knew the enshrouding darkness was peopled with grim men who watched him walk into the trap.

There was no lobby. They went up in an operate-it-yourself elevator, and got off at the fourth floor. She hesitated, looked as though she were about to speak, warn him. Then she bit her underlip and went across the corridor to knock peculiarly on the door of a front apartment.

The door opened noiselessly. Three killers confronted Brunt with drawn pistols. His hands went into the air instinctively. They stepped aside without relaxing their vigilance, and he was staring into the contorted features of The Monk.

IV

THE Monk's eyes held him with their reptilian gaze. The mobster muttered, "So?" sibilantly.

Brunt stammered: "What's all this about? This girl said I could make some money by coming with her."

The three gunmen were looking from The Monk to Brunt in awed amazement. The red-head pushed past Brunt to The Monk. "What'd I tell you? Ain't he the dead-ringer for you?" Dismay tempered the triumph in her voice.

The Monk put his arm about her slim waist, leering at Brunt. "Swell work, sweetie." To the trio, he said curtly: "Frisk him and tie him up. Plenty of adhesive tape on his yap. This is going to be like taking candy from a baby."

The mobsters grimly frisked Brunt, found no weapon, bound him hand and foot, silenced his weak protests with a gag of tape over his mouth. The red-head slipped from The Monk's embrace, watching the procedure with frightened eyes as though just realizing the part she had played in bringing Brunt here.

The true horror of the situation did not dawn on either Brunt or the girl until The Monk and his men withdrew to a side table and conferred over a whiskey bottle and glasses.

"Hell," The Monk was saying, "give me a drink before I get the jitters. Damned if I know whether that's me on the floor or whether I'm standing here."

"Ain't it the truth?" ejaculated a squat, brutalized member of the trio.

"What angle you gonna work on?" A sleek youth in his teens asked it.

The Monk put down a stiff drink. "There can't be but one angle. The G's have got the heat on. They ain't going to turn it off till they put me away. All right." The killer's full lips curled in a sneer. "We'll give them The Monk."

"This bozo?" A scarred face turned to look at Brunt.

"Why not? I got me a double. Just like a movie star." The Monk drank again and laughed boisterously. "We'll take him for a ride a little later. Give him to the Feds to play with. That's all. They'll be satisfied. Put some other sap on their Public Enemy list. We stick close for a few days, then slope with the heat off."

Brunt lay on the floor and heard The Monk signing his death warrant. His eyes went despairingly to the curtained front windows. A street light was just outside. It was a swell place to signal the G-Men from.

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He flexed his muscles, testing the cords that bound him. They were cutting into his flesh, inflexible. His eyes went from the grim faces of the quartet at the table to the scared countenance of the red-head cowering in the corner.

Vaguely, he pitied her. She seemed a forlorn figure. Probably she hadn't known what she was getting into when she stepped out with The Monk.

The Monk was silencing a protest from one of his men. "Sure. I got that angle figgered too. He checks with me all but the prints. That's where all the saps have been beat up to now. Fingerprints. Dillinger and Karpis! They tried acid and operations on their fingertips. There ain't but one way to get rid of this guy's prints so the Feds can't check and find out it ain't the real Monk they pick up dead tomorrow." He paused.

One of the trio moved uneasily, glancing over his shoulder at Brunt. "How you gonna work it, Monk?"

"Chop his damned fingers off," The Monk grated. "There'll be headlines in all the papers tomorrow, raving about The Monk having more guts than any of the other big-timers. And there'll be editorials pointing out that gang vengeance always catches up with them in the end. Crime don't pay, they'll be saying in big letters."

The three men turned to look at Brunt with new interest. He glared back at them, setting his teeth grimly behind the adhesive.

The red-head came out of her corner, gasping convulsively: "You can't do that, Monk. Not here. I won't let you do it here." She flung herself on him, sobbing wildly.

"Get away." The Monk swung his arm in a semicircle, crashing his palm against her face to send her reeling across the room. She came up against the front windows, stood with her back to them, body held rigidly erect, pathetically young eyes glazing over as The Monk ordered a butcher knife and bread board brought from the kitchen.

Brunt writhed ineffectually on the floor. His heart pounded wildly. His gaze clung in fascinated horror upon the gleaming, long-bladed butcher knife.

HE squirmed and threw himself about like a trapped wild thing, muttering crazy things behind the adhesive as the quartet gathered around him, loosened the cords binding his hands.

He was begging them to kill him. His begging was a mumble behind the gag. He went into a frenzy, trying to force them to kill him instead of doing this monstrous thing. A heavy man sat on his head, laughing coarsely.

The red-head swayed away from the window, throwing one hand up to cover her eyes as The Monk calmly knelt on the floor by Brunt. He drew a .45 automatic from a shoulder holster, set the sharp blade of the knife upright on the second joint of Brunt's left thumb.

"Lean on it heavy, now," he grunted to the two men holding Brunt's wrist. "I'm going to use my gun for a hammer. Want to cut it clean the first lick. It's going to be messy, but we'll bandage him up so he won't bleed to death . . ."

Brunt heard everything, felt everything, with extraordinary clarity. He had calmly faced death when undertaking this venture. But mutilation was different, somehow.

It didn't make it any easier to know that the G-Men had the building surrounded, were out there in the thick darkness—waiting for the signal he could not give.

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A savage leer distorted The Monk's face as he held heavy pistol poised above waiting knife.

The red-head screamed shrilly as the pistol descended unerringly.

Her body slid to the floor from in front of the window. Her single scream covered the slight sound of a key turning in the outer lock.

The four men were cursing excitedly, trying to stanch the flow of blood from Brunt's severed thumb.

Then the room was full of grim-faced men. They came from firemen's ladders through the front windows, leaping over the red-head's limp body.

They poured through the door with ready pistols and leveled machine guns.

The Monk was true to his rat-like tradition. He died like a cornered rat.

Men trampled on Brunt and bursting explosions sounded in his ears. His hand throbbed. A heel caught him behind the ear and he went out.

A doctor was binding his hand when events swam back into his consciousness. The Monk lay near him, his face evilly contorted in death.

Grimes bent over Brunt and tore the last of the tape from his mouth. Two G-Men were supporting the still limp body of the girl. The others had been taken away.

"Swell work," Grimes was saying exultantly. "You waited a little too long to signal." His gaze went meaningly to Brunt's bandaged hand. "But how the devil did you manage it at all?"

Brunt's eyes flickered from Grimes to the girl. The bow of her girlish sash had come untied. The flaring ends hung slackly—now that she had moved from the window and the breeze no longer caused them to flutter like a waving handkerchief.

He said weakly: "That girl pulled it. Right before their eyes. She—was working with me all the time."

The red-head moaned softly. Her eyes were coming open, reluctantly, as though she dared not let them gaze upon what she knew they would see.

Grimes shot an order at his men. They released her, stepped back. She tottered forward, unable yet to comprehend the trend of swiftly marching events.

Grimes caught and steadied her, grunting: "Swell work, sister. There'll be a reward for you two to split."

"Not to split." Brunt spoke evenly. His eyes were fixed upon The Monk, stiffening in death. "She needs it. I've got what I wanted. She . . . wants to get out of K. C. To a healthier climate. Maybe . . . I should, too."

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The Prize Dumbbell

By

Donald Barr Chidsey

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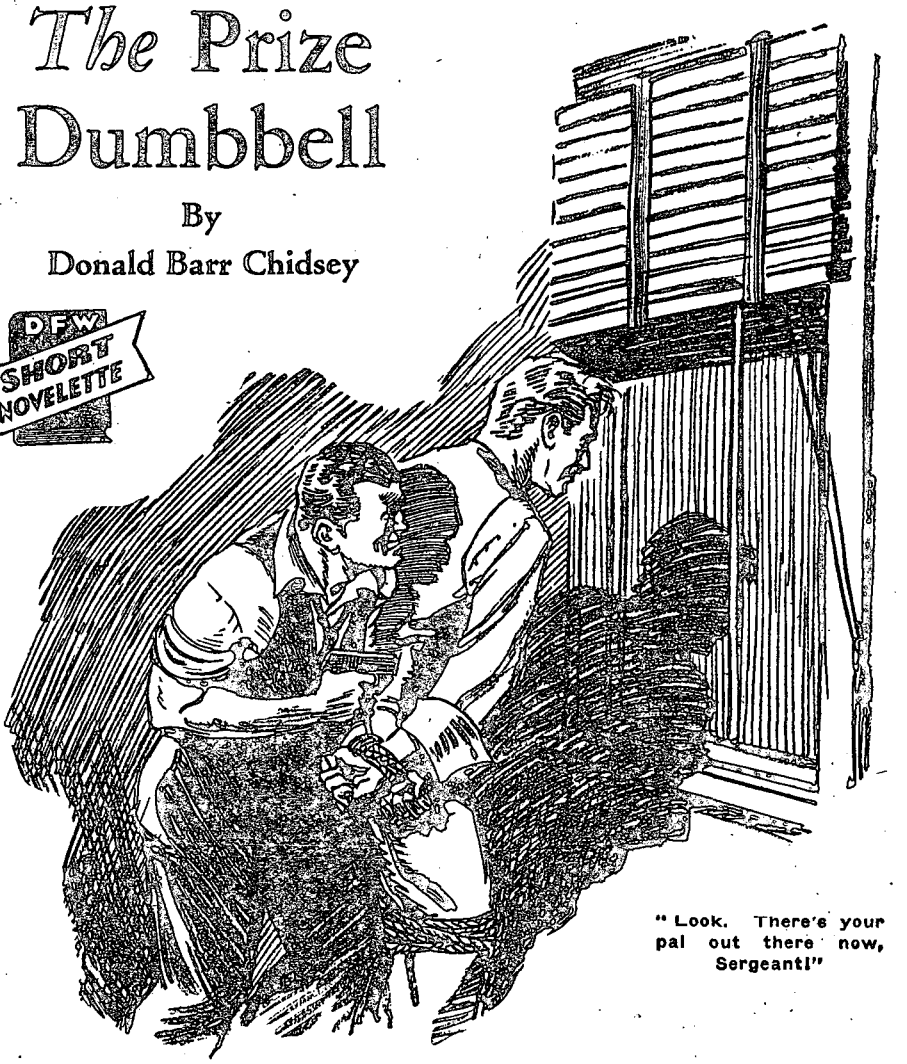

"Look. There's your pal out there now, Sergeant!"

It Takes a Real Dumbbell to Do the Obvious and Ruin a Carefully Laid Scheme of Cops — and Crooks!

CHAPTER I

A Man and His Shadow

THE downtown end of Flagler Street is probably the busiest place in the city. Morton stood there watching cars pass. Behind him, beyond the park, sunlight was bright upon the waters of Biscayne Bay.

Morton didn't look like a man-hunter. He was immaculately but conservatively dressed; he had a stolid, responsible manner; his eyes were a neutral gray, his mouth quiet, his head rather square; he seemed mild-mannered—just now indeed almost benign.

His partner, McGarvey, was fifteen or twenty feet away, excitedly bargaining

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for peanuts with a vendor at the curb. McGarvey, young and massive, was always excited about something.

Though it was the middle of the season there was really nothing for either of these men to worry about. Miami was clean, comparatively. The situation was well in hand: Morton himself, camera-eyed Morton, could vouch for this. There were no prominent crooks in town, and there was no reason to expect trouble.

Yet it is axiomatic that these are precisely the times when trouble comes.

The car was moving north, very slowly, close to the curb. It was a touring car with Pennsylvania plates and the driver was its only occupant. He wore dark clothes and a dark felt hat pulled low over his eyes.

When the car got opposite Morton it was scarcely moving. Suddenly the driver stepped hard on the accelerator, and at the same instant he drew an automatic and fired four times.

He should have fired first and stepped on the gas afterward. He must have been over-excited. As it was, the forward jerk of the car cost him his aim.

Even so, one bullet clipped Morton on the left shoulder. He had been rocking on toes and heels; and the force of the bullet, though no bone was touched, spun him around twice. He fell, reaching for his gun.

He didn't fire because there were too many other cars, too big a crowd; he might have killed some innocent bystander.

McGarvey wasn't so thoughtful. McGarvey bellowed like a wounded bull, dashed to the center of the Boulevard, and sent four slugs of lead after the car before it disappeared in traffic. Then he ran to a parked machine, jumped on the running board.

"Go! Don't just sit there—*go!*"

Morton too commandeered a car. But neither driver was eager to be killed, and both were frightened by the revolvers.

They shrieked around the traffic circle at 13th, McGarvey's car a little in the lead, McGarvey's mouth open in roars of rage which nobody could hear. A radio Ford joined the chase. But it was no use. The machine with the Pennsylvania plates was gone. They found it half an hour later over near the Seaboard Air Line yards, and they learned that afternoon that it had been stolen from a winter visitor who lived in Coconut Grove and who had a perfect alibi.

CAPTAIN MONTGOMERY was large and grave, a Buddha-like personage with pale blue eyes and a dark blue chin. He was a better politician than policeman, but he was good enough as a policeman to realize that Wentworth L. Morton was better. The Captain trusted Morton in all things, recognizing him, privately, as the real head of the Detective Division.

"I don't like it. There's no reason why anybody should take a crack at you, bang-bang-bang-bang, just like that." He fussed with papers. "Of course there are plenty of crooks you've put away, from time to time, and that swore revenge. Sure. But you know as well as I do that when the boys swear revenge under those circumstances they don't keep on meaning it. The can itself cools them off."

"Besides," young McGarvey added, "we checked up on every one you pinched and who got jail terms, and there's not a one of them that was released just lately."

McGarvey was wild with anxiety. Morton was his hero, one-time partner

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of McGarvey's old man, who had been killed at Morton's side; and the youngster had worshiped him since boyhood.

"I can't help thinking," Montgomery said slowly and carefully, seeming a shade embarrassed, "that it would be a good idea if you were to get out of town for a little while, Mort."

Morton's chin was low. He looked at Montgomery, moving only his eyes. He didn't say anything.

"I don't mean run away, of course," the Captain explained hastily. "It would be business, naturally. New York wired this morning that they've picked up the kid who pulled that haberdashery stick-up here last month, and we've got to send somebody up to extradite him—so why not you?"

"Sure," McGarvey said eagerly. "The trip'd do you good, Mort!"

Morton shifted gray tired eyes from Montgomery to his partner.

"Since when," he asked, "have I been running out on gun parties?"

"Now don't be a fool, Mort!" Montgomery leaned forward, waving his hands helplessly. "You know perfectly well that I didn't mean anything like that! But why stick your neck out?"

"Sure, Mort!" McGarvey chimed in. "Whoever that guy was, he meant to kill you. There wasn't anybody else around. He must have meant it for you!"

Morton said: "Well?"

Nobody answered. They knew how stubborn the man could be. They knew how he despised criminals, and how seriously he took his job.

Morton went on slowly. "There's more to this than just a killing. It wasn't revenge, I don't think. Just like you said, Monty, cons don't get out with ideas of revenge still blazing inside of them. It was something else.

"Now I'm not pinning medals on my own chest," he continued, "but the guy who killed me would know, if he knew anything at all, that it would cause one awful stink in this town. Right?"

Montgomery nodded. McGarvey nodded.

"All right then. Whoever blasted at me must be somebody the cops don't know. Otherwise he wouldn't take the chance. But what did he do it for? There can only be one reason. He wanted to get rid of me because he wanted to pull some big job here."

Montgomery said patiently, respectfully: "If he wanted to pull a big job, why should he be afraid of you—I mean, if he hasn't got a record, if he's somebody you don't know?"

"Maybe he's got friends, outside. Friends that are afraid to come here to Miami unless and until I'm out of the way. I don't want to boast, Monty, but you know yourself that I'm probably familiar with the mugs and *modus operandi* of more crooks than anybody else in the state."

"More than anybody else in the *country*," McGarvey amended.

"But what are you going to do about it, Mort?" Montgomery asked. "We don't want to see you shot."

"Well, if it comes to that, I don't want to see *myself* shot. But the only way I can figure it is that somebody's boxing something damn big—so big they don't mind bumping off a popular hero by way of preliminary—and I want to find out what it's all about."

"How?"

Morton only shrugged. He never would tell anybody how he worked. He was inherently secretive. Even McGarvey, his partner and protégé, seldom knew what Morton was thinking about.

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"I'll assign you a bodyguard," Montgomery decided.

"You won't do any such thing! I don't want a lot of flatfeet getting in my way everywhere I go."

"Well, *I'll* go with you anyway!" shouted McGarvey.

"I suppose you will," said Morton, and sighed. "You would anyway. If I tried to shoo you off, you'd come trailing along behind, ducking in back of trees whenever I looked around—and that would be worse than having you next to me. Well, all right. Come on."

"Where do we go first?"

"How should I know?"

THEY just ambled, apparently aimless. Huge McGarvey, perspiring, looking anxious, watched his partner like a fussy hen. He did everything but take Morton's arm when they crossed streets. Morton seemed to have no great interest in anything, yet he went everywhere and asked all sorts of questions. Of course everybody knew him and he knew everybody—he'd been a cop for many years and he never forgot a face or a name, they said.

"I can't see where this is getting us anywhere," McGarvey growled.

"Maybe not," Morton shrugged. "But we're going to do the same thing tonight, and also tomorrow. And the next day and the next, if we have to. There's something wrong in this town, and we're going to find out what it is."

His method, or lack of method, was curious. He simply went around asking questions. He listened to loud congratulations on his recent escape from death, but he never permitted men to talk for long about this. He asked questions, quietly, firmly, without any obvious purpose. McGarvey trailing him watchfully, he went to stores, filling stations, beaneries, drinking establishments, hotels. He talked also to people he met in the street, dozens of them. That night he and his shadow went to many gambling resorts. That night, too, seemingly for no reason at all, they drifted into the magazine store at Flagler and Miami Avenue. The proprietor congratulated Morton on his escape of the morning.

"Boy! They better be careful about how they take potshots at you, Mort! If you ever got killed it'd sure be a scandal that'd tear this town apart!"

"Yeah." Morton lighted a cigar. "What's been happening lately, Andy? Any trick customers?"

"What do you mean, any trick customers?"

"Well, anything unusual?"

"I don't know what you mean, Mort. I get a lot of funny customers here sometimes, people I never seen before. You know we carry newspapers from all different cities all over the country—"

"I know that."

"—and that means a lot of strangers."

"Anything funny about any of them the last few days?"

"Well . . ." Andy was thinking, a considerable effort. "I don't know as you'd exactly call this funny. It probably don't mean anything."

"Come on. Tell papa."

"Well, anyway, there was a guy came here about a week ago and bought a copy of the San Francisco *Examiner*. Only one we carry. The next day he was in and bought a Salt Lake City paper, and the next day he bought a Denver *Post*."

"Same guy?"

"Same guy. And what's more, he was in here again yesterday and bought

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a copy of the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*, and damned if this morning he didn't buy a Louisville *Journal*."

"Hum-m. . . . Getting closer to Miami all the time, eh? He wasn't help from one of the hotels around here, was he?"

"Didn't look like it."

"What time does he come? The same time each day?"

"Yeah. Late in the morning. Around eleven or half-past."

"What's he look like?"

"Oh, I wouldn't know. Kind of medium height and medium build, and I guess brown hair. That ain't much help, is it?"

McGarvey blurted: "No help at all!"

"Oh, I don't know," Morton said. "It's hard to tell. Listen, Andy. If that guy comes tomorrow you give Garv here the high-sign. He'll be across the street. And, Garv, you follow the guy. Don't speak to him or try to pick him up or anything! Just tail him, and when he goes somewhere give me a ring at headquarters."

"I can't see any sense to this!"

"I can't either," Morton confessed. "That's why I want to know more about it." He turned to the proprietor. "You got extra copies of those papers he bought?"

"Some. Not the Frisco paper or the Salt Lake City one, but I think I got extra copies of the others."

"Let's have them."

CHAPTER II

It's in the Papers

MORTON was a bachelor and lived alone, except for a Negro housekeeper who came in for a few hours each day. Scrupulously neat about everything, he didn't much need that housekeeper. In fact, he seldom was home anyway. Tireless, for all his years—he was not far from fifty—he practically lived on his job, and it was not at all unusual for him to spend the night at the office. McGarvey would go there in the morning and find the place blue with cigar smoke, which invariably annoyed McGarvey, who didn't use tobacco.

Sometimes, however, Morton went home just for the sake of quiet, when he had an exceptionally knotty problem. Morton had thousands of acquaintances, from billionaires to pickpockets, whom he called by their first names; but he had almost no friends. Perhaps young McGarvey was the only one. Morton and the elder McGarvey, dead now, had been close personal friends and bitter pinochle enemies for many years, back to the harness days when each had pounded a beat. So Morton took a sentimental interest in the youngster, who was his old man all over again, loud-mouthed, a fool for fighting, not bright, loyal to the core. Yet Morton was getting crabby as he got old; and he used to bawl out young McGarvey pitilessly. He had an idea that it was good for the kid.

He was at home, the following noon, when McGarvey entered. Morton had three newspapers in front of him, opened to classified advertising pages, and he was making all sorts of strange marks on many sheets of paper; he was frowning.

"Find out where that guy lives?" he asked, without looking up.

"He's registered at the Espanola under the name of Lester Washburne. Been there a week. Nobody knows anything about him. Today at Andy's place he bought a copy of this morning's Florida *Times-Union*."

Morton muttered: "Frisco, Salt

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Lake, Denver, St. Louis, Louisville and now Jacksonville. It gets closer all the time."

"What'd you find out?"

"Well, I looked in the classified ads because if this guy Washburne was getting messages from somebody, as looks likely, it would probably be under the personals. I didn't find anything under the personals, but under the 'For Sale' classifications I found—"

He skidded three papers across the desk, one from Denver, one from St. Louis, one from Louisville. Each had a single advertisement circled by pencil mark. The advertisement was the same but the signature different in each.

Second-hand Frigidaire; excellent condition; cheap; inquire Dwnn Lacjac, Post.

This was in the Denver paper. The ad in the St. Louis paper the following day was signed "Nuwnqalwch, Post-Dispatch." The one from Louisville, the day after that, ended "Yalacsjw, Journal."

"Hungarian?" McGarvey suggested brightly.

"No, and not Bohemian either. Or Russian."

"Well, what is it then?"

"Cypher. It's a funny thing that responsible newspapers like those would accept such ads, but maybe the dumbbells didn't know it was cypher. If that's the case, the bird who inserted these—assuming they were all inserted by the same man—must look and talk like a foreigner to make them think those were really his names."

"Oh. . . . Cypher? You figured out what they mean?"

McGARVEY had unbounded confidence in his partner's mental ability. McGarvey was the brawn, six foot three of bone and hard muscle; but Morton was the brain. McGarvey often contended that there wasn't anything in the world his partner couldn't figure out.

Now Morton gave him a stare.

"I've only had a couple of hours." He waved to the books at his elbow, copies of Thomas, Yardley and Hitt. "There's only one double, and the frequency tables don't help much because there's so little to go on. Only those few words."

McGarvey proudly placed an empty Coco-Cola bottle on the table. It was covered with fine saffron powder.

"Well, I don't know about that stuff," he said, "but at least I know fingerprints. Here's Washburne's, on this bottle. A perfect set, for one hand. That isn't like having all ten, of course, and I couldn't look 'em up in our own Henry files, but I wired a classification of each one to Washington, and maybe they'll have them in that single print department they got there."

Morton rose, frowning. His voice rasped.

"I thought I told you not to do anything but tail that guy to wherever he lived? Where'd you get the prints?"

"He stopped in at a soft drink joint and I ranged up alongside of him and had a coke. Then I wiped off the bottle and handed it to him, holding it by the neck, and asked him 'Is this yours, brother?' He took hold of it before he realized what he was doing. Smart, huh?"

"*Smart!* It's the dumbest thing you ever did!"

"Well, what the hell? He didn't know who I was! How should he know I was a cop?"

McGarvey stood there, a perplexed giant, with huge hands, huge feet, a huge Irish face. Oh, no! Nobody would have supposed for an instant that *he* was a cop.

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Morton pursed thin lips, shook his head. He seldom permitted himself to get sore and show it, except in the presence of his partner. He was showing it now.

"And then what did you do, Sherlock Holmes? I suppose you trailed him to the Espanola and then peeked through his keyhole, just so that nobody would suspect that you belong to the police?"

"Now don't get sore—"

"*Who's* getting sore?"

McGarvey ignored that last. "All I did was, I tailed him to the hotel, and when he went upstairs I asked a few questions about him—from bellhops. Found out how long he'd been there and the fact that he hadn't had any visitors or received any mail. I tried to get hold of whatever he threw out in his waste basket from day to day, but they didn't have it there any more. It had gone right along with the rest of the garbage."

"Which is where you ought to go, too!" Morton stalked to a window. He flapped his arms. "No wonder a detective can't get anywhere, when he's harnessed to a half-wit like you!"

McGarvey reddened. He wouldn't have taken this from any other man on earth, and even taking it from Morton was difficult.

"Now wait a minute, Mort—"

"Didn't I tell you to do nothing but follow the guy? Didn't I tell you to see where he was living and then give me a ring?"

"I did give you a ring, but they told me at headquarters you were out here."

"Yes, and by that time you'd stuck that big nose of yours into every place where it's got no business to be! What kind of guys do you think we're dealing with in this case—morons, like you?"

"I know, Mort, but if I didn't do that work you would have done it yourself, and I didn't like the idea of you prowling around like that. After what happened yesterday—"

"Oh, nuts! I'd be as safe in the Espanola as I am right here this minute!"

Wild with disgust, he turned from the window. And at that instant the window was smashed. It made such an immediate noise that neither detective even heard the boom of the first shot outside. However, they did hear the second and third shots.

Two pieces of flying glass cut Morton's neck and left cheek, not severely. An electric light fixture on the far side of the room clanged indignantly. There was a "thunk" just below this, and a hole appeared in the wall.

Morton dropped. McGarvey, swearing thunderously, dashed for the hall.

"Hold it, you ape! Or they'll get you!" Morton roared.

BUT McGarvey didn't even hear. McGarvey never would listen to a voice of caution. He never believed in being careful. He would have charged a whole company of machine gunners if he'd been sore enough; and he was sore enough now. They weren't going to shoot at old Mort like that, the dirty crooks! A minute later he stood spread-legged in the middle of the street, his revolver kicking in his big right hand, his brows meeting in a black, dragon-like frown.

This time there were no cars to commandeer. McGarvey himself had walked from the bus line, the department Ford he usually drove being in the repair shop.

They found the gunman's automobile half an hour later, a mile away. The same story. It had been stolen

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from a man in Coral Gables. There were four bullet holes in the back; which wasn't bad marksmanship, considering.

At the same time this was being reported, Morton and McGarvey were surveying evidences of a hasty departure at the Espanola.

Morton sighed, went to the waste basket. There was a copy of that morning's Florida *Times-Union* from Jacksonville. Morton turned to the classified advertisement pages, to the "For Sale" column.

Second-hand Frigidaire; excellent condition; cheap; inquire Dwnn Lacjac, Times-Union.

Morton muttered: "So it's Dwnn Lacjac again, huh?" He turned to the hotel detective. "Better stick around, just in case. Not much chance that he'll ever come back, but you better stay here a while."

"Oh, sure! Sure, I'll stay!"

Captain Montgomery said, from the doorway: "But *you* won't, Mort. I don't care what you say now, I've had enough of this stuff. We just can't afford to lose you. You get out of town."

"Now listen, there's going to be a big job pulled—"

"Mort, there's no job big enough to make it worth your death to us. I'll take the responsibility. Whether you like it or not, I'm ordering you to start for New York City tonight to extradite that stick-up youngster. I'm *ordering* you, understand?"

The veteran protested for a little while, then suddenly was still, nodding. And Montgomery, who had been about ready to break before his crack assistant's stubbornness, exhaled in relief.

"Eight-fourteen at the East Coast station. And see that you're there, or else I'll send somebody to get you!" He tried to take the edge off this command with a little jocularity. "I'm going to treat you the same way you've treated so many dips and gangsters here, Mort. I'm going to see you on that train personally."

"And so am I," said McGarvey.

CHAPTER III

Exiled Gumshoe

THEY did. Wentworth L. Morton, however, did not appear annoyed. There was a faraway, sleepwalkery look in his eyes, and his lips moved without words. Now and then he would make letters on a scrap of paper.

"Dwnn lacjac, dwnn lacjac," he kept muttering. "I could blow this whole case wide open if I only knew what dwnn lacjac means."

Montgomery knew ciphers, too.

"What have you tried for a key word?" he asked.

"The names of all the crooks I can think of that are out of jail and that might conceivably be planning to pull a big job down here. Particularly those that look foreign and that might have somebody chasing them. The guy who inserted these advertisements must be traveling around the country pretty fast. And that might mean somebody's after him. Also, why should he use classified ads?"

"I give up. Why?"

"Because he doesn't want somebody to know who they're meant for. If he sent a wire or a special delivery letter, it would be a matter of record. This is different. Anybody could read these ads—anybody who happened to be looking for them."

"And Lester Washburne was looking for them," McGarvey said. "Don't worry, Mort. We'll get that guy, if he's still in town."

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"Yes, if he's still in town."

McGarvey, after all, though not too bright, was a trained policeman. He had taken a long and thoughtful look at Lester Washburne, and unlike Andy the magazine store man, to whom Washburne had been merely one among hundreds of hurrying customers, McGarvey was able to describe him. The description had been broadcast—five feet ten, 145 pounds, brown eyes, light brown hair, cleft chin, small flat ears, good teeth, no scars on face or hands. The trouble was, it might have fitted so many men. Still, they had the fingerprints of Washburne's right hand.

"If I only knew what dwnn lacjac means. . . ."

He was muttering to himself as the train pulled out. He sat in a drawing room; and only at the last moment, only because of the yells practically at his elbow, did he glance out of the window. He glimpsed Captain Montgomery, Potts of the Traffic Squad, two patrolmen whose names he didn't remember, three reporters—and McGarvey.

It was McGarvey who made most of the noise. McGarvey was wide-eyed with fear. He was seldom that way and his courage was celebrated, and many a criminal had known cause to curse it. What McGarvey was afraid of now was not his own safety; it was Morton's safety. He worshiped that man. They had been in tight places together; and in the heat of a fight it didn't seem to mean so much. Mort was no fool, and no slouch with his gun either. But this was different. Somebody was trying to assassinate Mort. Cold-blooded. It was different; and young McGarvey was scared. His whole face expressed it. He was yelling it as the train drew out. Morton couldn't catch the words themselves, but he knew from the expression on McGarvey's face that the kid was yelling to him to be careful.

Morton grinned a little, absent-mindedly; and then he went back to work on dwnn lacjac.

ALL the way to West Palm Beach, which was to be the only stop until Jacksonville, he worked over those words, occasionally trying his guessed keys with the other words—nuwnqalwch and yalacsjw. He got as far with one as with the other. He tried them—always with a hunch for a key word—as de Vigeneres, da Portas, Beauforts, Mexicans, Saint Cyrs, Grosfelds, Playfairs. . . .

At West Palm Beach he got out, paced the platform for a few minutes. It was a dead-quiet night. Some few passengers got on, but Morton paid them no attention. When the train drew out Morton was back in his drawing room, guessing keys.

His memory was an extraordinary thing and famous; a filing cabinet, a storehouse where nothing was misplaced. A large portion of the American underworld was dragged out, in this memory of Morton's, and reviewed in its various aliases.

Not a one of them unlocked dwnn lacjac and nuwnqalwch and yalacsjw.

Somebody, damn it, was missing! There was *somebody* whose name he couldn't remember!

After a while, an hour or so out of West Palm Beach, he stiffened in his seat. It was not an idea! His brain was blank now. He had thought too hard.

It was not an idea! It was a warning, from somewhere inside of him. Morton had a nose for trouble; an instinct like that of a jungle beast who

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is aware of danger even when there is no smell of danger, not any sound, nor any *sight* of danger. Morton had hunted so much—hunted men. His nerves got tight now, and his chin went up. He himself couldn't have told you why.

He rose without a sound, and for half a minute he stood there swaying with the swaying of the train. Then he leaped at the door of the drawing room, wrenched it open.

A man was walking away, walking around a curve in the Pullman corridor. The man could have been going to a washroom, but he was moving a shade too fast. Morton suddenly was no thinker, but a fighter. He obeyed his hunch. Often he had cautioned McGarvey against doing anything without preliminary thought, without doping the matter out first; but now he acted on sheer instinct. He jumped at the man, grabbed the man's shoulder, whirled the man around with all his strength.

"Say, what's the idea of—"

That was all the man had a chance to say. Morton, who was close to fifty, brought up a right fist, then a left fist, both to the same place, which was the man's jaw.

There wasn't much room. The man's head went back, slapped with vehemence against the wall. The man's eyes went glassy. His whole face expressed astonishment—except the eyes, which had no expression at all. His mouth was open, his cheek muscles were drawn, but his eyes were utterly blank. He was out on his feet.

Morton hit him again, deliberately. And the man collapsed.

Cruel? Well, you do funny things sometimes when you're a cop. And after all, somebody had been shooting at Morton, and trying to kill him. Morton had been doing too much thinking. It wasn't a time for thinking now.

The man's knees banged upon the floor. There wasn't room for him to pitch forward. Anyway, Morton caught him.

Morton hauled him into the drawing room, tossed him on the floor, turned.

A porter appeared at the end of the corridor.

"You ask for sompin, Boss?"

"No."

"Ah thought Ah heard sompin. Thought Ah heard a noise."

"No noise."

The porter was puzzled. His face shone with sweat. His eyes, enormous, white, shrieking perplexity.

"Boss, Ah thought Ah heard a noise just now."

"You didn't hear any noise. Or would you rather I yanked one of your arms out of joint?"

Morton took a step forward. The porter turned and ran.

Morton went back into the drawing room. The man he had knocked out was stirring.

"Funny," Morton muttered. "I thought that would put you away for quite a while. Either you're tougher than you look or else I'm loosing my slap. Getting old. I guess that's it."

The man was dressed in brown, good clothes, not sensational. He was of medium height, and weighed perhaps 145 pounds. He had thin hair, light brown; and brown eyes; and a cleft chin. His ears, very small, were flat against his head.

Somebody knocked. Morton answered, opening the door only a few inches.

It was the conductor.

"Sorry to bother you—"

"Not at all."

"The porter said he thought he

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heard something that sounded like a fight around here somewhere."

"The porter's nuts."

"No fight?"

"No fight," Morton said.

"Well, what was the noise he said he heard, then?"

"That was me yelling for a bottle of ink."

"But I don't understand."

"You know what ink means, don't you? I for Isadore, N for Nothing, K for Kentucky. *Ink*. Clear?"

"You mean you want the porter to bring you a bottle of ink?"

"I don't know how I can make it any clearer."

"Oh!"

The conductor went away; and soon the porter returned, actually with a bottle of ink. Morton, never letting him look into the drawing room, thanked him quietly. The porter was frightened.

AT that, the ink didn't do any good until Morton had thinned it with water from the washbasin. It wasn't like printers' ink. But eventually he got a fair set of prints from the right hand, and he compared these with photographs of the prints from the Coco-Cola bottle. Clamm, the department photographer, had done a very neat job with that bottle.

"I can't understand it," Morton said to himself.

The man was conscious now, but still stunned. He saw Morton. His eyes came way out. He reached for the empty holster under his left arm, not knowing that it was empty.

"Save yourself the trouble, Washburne. That's one of the first things they taught me when I joined the cops—to frisk a prisoner right away."

Lester Washburne tried to get up. Desperate, he would have tackled Morton with his bare hands. Morton kicked him in the side of the head, and snapped: "Keep quiet or I'll kill you."

Washburne settled down as though for a good long sleep. His brief blur of consciousness was past. Morton, frowning rather terribly, clipped handcuffs on the man's wrists and hitched the chain around a pipe just underneath the washbasin. It was a bit hard on Washburne, whose shoulders were thereby lifted half an inch from the floor; but Morton didn't mind that.

Morton sat for some time staring at the man. It still made no sense. He did not believe that Washburne had meant to kill him—not tonight. He had no way to be sure of this; but he believed that Washburne was on the train merely to see that Morton did not get out at some way station and sneak back into Miami. That was the way Morton figured it. Whoever it was who was manipulating this business, he most assuredly did not want Wentworth L. Morton to be home.

Questioning Washburne, who was recovering consciousness again, would do no good. Morton wasn't above beating a man. But from long experience he knew criminals—knew when they would talk and when they wouldn't. Lester Washburne was an insignificant looking person, the sort who might be lost in a crowd of four or five; but he wouldn't talk. Morton knew he wouldn't talk.

Morton was tired; his head ached; and he realized, abruptly, that he hadn't slept more than two hours out of the past thirty-six. There was no profit in trying to think any more. He was thought out. He shrugged, stretched himself in the berth. He almost went to sleep.

Almost—but not quite.

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It came to him very suddenly, while the train lurched apologetically from side to side and the wheels underneath click-clacked upon the rails. It came to him just like that.

He sat up, swinging his legs over the side of the berth. He stared at Lester Washburne, who stared back without expression.

"Mike DeLong," Morton said.

Washburne said nothing.

"It's the only one left," Morton said. "I don't know how I managed to forget him all this time. Mike DeLong has been out of stir for almost two months now. He should have been electrocuted, but he's free. And he could no more be straight than he could fly. It's Mike DeLong."

Still Washburne said nothing. Morton grinned, nodded.

"So *that's* who you're working for? And Mike doesn't want me around town, huh? Let's see—"

He was busy with paper and pencil for almost half an hour. He tried the name as a key to every cypher he knew; and at last he found where it belonged—a modified Mexican Vigenere. A fairly simple cypher, as a matter of fact, once you had the key word. Morton wrote hastily: DELONGABCFHIJKMPQRSTUVWXYZ, and directly underneath that ELONGABCFHIJKMPQRSTUVWXYZL, and then LONGABCFHIJKMPQRSTUVWXYZDE, and so on until he arrived at ZDELONGABCFHIKMPQRSTUVWXY. After that it was just a matter of tracing the letters to the center for the solution.

"D" was "K" and "W" was "I" and "N" was "L." "Dwnn" was "kill." He could have guessed what "lacjac" was, but he worked it out to be sure. "Lacjac" of course was "Morton."

Twice that message had been inserted in a newspaper; once in Denver; again, four days later, in Jacksonville.

Morton grinned a little, looked up at Lester Washburne. There was absolutely no expression on Washburne's face.

Nuwnqalwch was "Phil coming." Phil Masterson? Probably. Phil Masterson was just the kind of gun Mike DeLong could get, and control. And Phil Masterson was well known to Morton, who would not have permitted him to remain from sunrise to sunset in Miami.

If Morton had learned that Phil Masterson was in Miami, he would have arrested the rat on a vagrancy charge and McGarvey would have pummeled him until Masterson talked. Because Masterson *would* talk, if he were hit hard enough and often enough.

That was a good reason to get Morton out of town.

One reason.

Yalacsjw was "Joe on way." The name meant nothing specific to Morton, who knew many Joes, good, bad and indifferent. It might be Joe Chase, the crooked flyer, the dopy, who had from time to time been mixed up with several hold-up artists like Mike DeLong; or it might be Joe the Greek, who had broken McAlister Penitentiary a few weeks ago; or it might be Joe Watts, or Joe "Skins" Harris, or Joe Pawley. Profitless to try to figure that one out. Morton already had enough.

"So Mike's going to crack something big in my town?" he said to Washburne. "So Mike's getting his cannons together, all set for something, and you were laying the groundwork? But the biggest part of your job was to blast me out, or else try to scare

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me away from town, huh? Sweetheart, you've failed."

Lester Washburne didn't say a word.

CHAPTER IV

Hostage

MORTON would have telephoned, but it was dawn and already the train was click-clacking across switches as it pulled into the yards at Jacksonville. Presently the train stopped.

Morton got out, looked around. A chunky, sullen-faced fellow stood nearby, and Morton walked up to him without hesitation.

"Where's Wally?"

"Off."

The chunky fellow stared at Morton. The question had been unexpected and he had answered without thinking.

"You work under him?"

"Who wants to know?"

"I'm Morton of Miami. Is that enough?"

It was wonderful what that name could do. They jumped when they heard it, even railroad dicks.

"Hell, yes, Sergeant! What can I do for you? Say, I hear somebody's been trying to gun you down there?"

"Did you hear that? Well, I'm going back. As fast as I can get there. When's the next train south?"

"Ten-nineteen, Sergeant."

"Too long to wait. What about a plane?"

"Not until this afternoon. Unless you want to charter one. There's a taxi plane out at the municipal airport. Guy named Sanders. Information will connect you with him."

"Sold," said Morton.

He started away. He stopped. He took a key from his keyring and tossed it to the railroad detective.

"There's a punk in 8, in this car, cuffed to a pipe. Take him to city headquarters and hold him there until you hear from me."

"Sure, Sergeant. What's the charge?"

"How should I know? Call it vagrancy. Until you hear from me. Right?"

"Absolutely, Sergeant."

"The charge will *probably* be attempted murder," Morton added. "But that can wait. Where's a booth?"

Sanders was not at the airport. Somebody who was half asleep told Morton that Sanders and his plane had been chartered early in the evening and were not expected back until the next day. Morton long distanced his partner in Miami.

"That you, Mort? Where are you? Oh, Jacksonville? Say, we're going to get that guy Washburne yet, you take my word for it!"

"As far as that goes," Morton said wearily, "I've got Washburne myself. What's more, I've found out what dwnn lacjac means."

"What?"

"It means 'Kill Morton.' Now listen: You've heard of a guy called Mike Delong, also Mike Langley and Mike Lawrence and Mike God-knows how-many-other-things? Same guy."

"Sure! He's a killer. Got out of Joliet a couple of months ago, didn't he?"

"He did. Now get this straight, Garv. Mike Delong is no dumbbell and he doesn't care for piker stuff. He doesn't touch anything unless there's a hundred grand or so in it. Well, Mike's going to do something in Miami pretty soon. I don't know just when, but I got an idea it will be pretty soon, now that they think I'm away."

"But you *are* away, Mort!"

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"I'm coming back," Morton said grimly. "Now never mind that it's dangerous stuff! I'm coming back. There's no train for quite a while and I can't hire a plane, so I'm going to hire a car instead and drive back. I'll be starting just as soon as I can get the car. Ought to get there some time late in the afternoon. Don't be looking for me! I want you to look for Mike DeLong instead. And also for a gun named Phil Masterson. And, in fact, for anybody else who might be mixed up in a crowd like that. Don't take any chances! If you find any of those boys, stick 'em behind the bars. Never mind on what charge. You just put them away, savvy?"

"Mort, I wish you wouldn't come back until this is all over."

McGarvey was very earnest. Morton smiled a little.

"Garv," he said, "you do what I told you. See you soon. Bye."

THE fastest car the rental place had in stock was a Packard sedan. It was in beautiful condition. Morton had it going at better than fifty when he crossed the bridge over the St. John's River; and after that he really opened it up.

Jacksonville to Miami is a matter of 357½ miles; but the road, mostly concrete, is as flat and bumpless as a ballroom floor.

Morton was tired and cross He never did like driving; McGarvey did the driving for them, ordinarily.

Somewhere about halfway to St. Augustine there was a curve which Morton took at sixty-two or three. Fortunately the brakes were good. But it required every ounce of Morton's strength, when he saw the cars, to bring that Packard to a stop.

The cars were smeared right across the road, one facing north, the other facing south, and their front bumpers were tangled. Two men stood in the wan, early sunlight, swearing spiritedly at one another.

It was a matter of half inches, and Morton *could* have passed without using brakes. McGarvey, who drove like a fiend out of Hades, would have done so.

"If you're going to fight about it," he yelled as he edged past the two cars, "you might as well pull over to the side and let somebody else use the road!"

At his elbow somebody said: "The reason they didn't is because I told them not to."

The Packard, clear, was picking up speed. Morton moved only his eyes, seeing the man with the revolver.

"Hello, Mike," he said quietly.

"Hello, Sergeant. When we edge you out of town at last, why the hell don't you *stay* out?"

Michael DeLong was in his upper twenties, but he might have been fifty-odd. He was short, swart, very heavy, at a glance only a gorilla; but when you looked at him closer you saw, from his eyes, that the man wasn't dumb. There was nothing wild about him. He could plan a job carefully, and indeed it was difficult to think of him doing anything without plenty of preliminary thought. He held the revolver casually, as though it were something he just happened to have in his hand. But he would have fired, and accurately, without the slightest compunction. Morton knew that.

"It might be a good idea if you stopped, Sergeant."

Morton stopped.

"I can't understand," Morton said, "how you got ahead of me."

"Saw you talking to the railroad

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dick, and then we saw him go into the Pullman and take Washy out. And you telephoned first and then headed for a car livery. Not hard to figure, was it? So we scampered on ahead."

Morton saw in the mirror that the two men who had been squabbling now were walking toward his car. They both had guns in their hands. They both were grinning. Clearly they thought this boss of theirs was a very smart man indeed.

Morton said, "Well. . . ." which might have meant anything. He put the car into first. Then suddenly he slapped it into reverse, let up on the clutch pedal, stepped hard on the gas.

The car jerked backward with abrupt violence. Then it stopped.

Mike DeLong's head banged against the windshield. His gun exploded twice. Morton, who must have been crazy, grabbed the barrel of the gun, knocked the car into second with his elbow, stepped on the gas again.

The car jerked forward.

Just about as wild a thing as he could have tried. The sort of thing young McGarvey could do, sometimes, and get away with. But not Morton. Morton was no kid, no madman, like McGarvey. He didn't have McGarvey's Irish luck.

The men in back started to run, and one of them fired a couple of shots. Mike DeLong didn't struggle for possession of the revolver. He simply let the revolver go; and before Morton, astonished, could turn the thing, DeLong had pulled a second gun.

"'Gone nuts in your old age, Sergeant?"

DeLong wasn't a bit ruffled. Morton, though sore, almost admired the man.

Morton made no attempt to use the revolver. He knew when he was licked. He braked the car and dropped the gun.

"Going to be good now?"

Morton said wearily: "'Yeah. Going to be good."

One of the men from behind jumped to the running board and started to club Morton with the butt of his pistol. Morton said: "'Hey!" indignantly. DeLong yelled something, too late to do any good.

The first two blows were over-hasty. They hurt, but Morton could have taken them. The third was different. The man had swung this one with more deliberation. The air went all red in front of Morton, and swam in fast circles, and then it exploded, redder still.

He felt the fourth blow, but only foggily, indifferently. It didn't mean anything.

He didn't feel any of the others.

After a while Mike DeLong said coldly: "'When I tell you to slug a guy, that's the time to slug a guy. Do you think I couldn't handle this baby by myself?"

The man cried: "He's a cop, ain't he?"

"Sure he's a cop, and a damn good one, too."

"'Well?"

"'Oh, let it go,"' DeLong said with disgust.

They carried Morton into the back of one of the other cars. A man observed that it seemed like a lot of trouble to take, and suggested the river and weights. DeLong told him to shut up.

"Well, what are we going to do with the guy then? What's the sense of carrying him along? He won't enjoy the party."

"This guy Morton," DeLong consented to explain, "is big-time stuff around Miami. They think a lot of him."

"Snatch dough?"

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"Emergency. If anything goes wrong and we've got to dicker, this guy Morton is the sweetest card we could hold. He stays alive just as long as we need him. Do I make myself clear?"

CHAPTER V

Snatch No. 2

McGARVEY was two hundred-odd pounds of sweat and anxiety. He couldn't be still. He telephoned constantly, pestering people; and he stormed in and out of Captain Montgomery's office. The Captain himself was worried, but he was not hysterical, like McGarvey.

"Now what you do is you take it easy, Garv. I've known Mort for a good many years and I've known him to get himself out of some pretty bad jams. Mort knows how to take care of himself. He probably just had some engine trouble or something."

But when a deputy sheriff telephoned from St. John's County with the news that the Packard sedan had been found abandoned near St. Augustine with what appeared to be human blood on the back of the driver's seat—then even Montgomery showed anxiety. The car, the sheriff reported, was in perfect condition.

"Engine trouble, huh? Damn it, Monty, he *would* try to come back here! I couldn't talk him out of it. Just because he happens to be the best cop in the world he feels that this town is his own personal responsibility."

"Yeah, he's pretty serious about it," Montgomery muttered.

"And this guy Mike DeLong, from what Mort himself told me over the wire, is plenty bad!"

"He is," Montgomery agreed. "I met him once. That was seven-eight years ago, before you were even on the force. Mort picked him up in a night club and he got extradited to Illinois. Had a smart lawyer, I guess. Or pull. He should have been electrocuted, but he got out with a short sentence. Naturally, he doesn't like Mort."

"Monty, if he hurts Mort I'll find the guy if I have to search the whole world for him! I'll take him apart with my own hands!"

"Mort'll get out of it somehow. Hell, Garv, he's *got* to!"

All this, being merely talk, wasn't getting them anywhere. Nevertheless there was plenty of work going on. Every man on the force was busy. There were no pictures in Miami of Mike DeLong or Phil Masterson, but descriptions of them had been broadcast; and Montgomery himself had wired to Washington requesting pictures to be rushed south by plane. The cops were going everywhere, asking questions, picking up suspects, turning the town upside down.

"The way to find Mort is to find this guy DeLong first," McGarvey said for the fifteenth or sixteenth time. "And they're not going to find DeLong by going to the usual dumps. He'd be wise enough to keep away from them."

Montgomery was a large, pale man, ordinarily as impassive as an Oriental; but now his patience was running out.

"All right," he snapped. "Why don't you go out and find Mike DeLong then?"

"I think I will," McGarvey said slowly. "Can I borrow your car, Monty?"

"Help yourself. So long as you get out of this place and let somebody get some work done for a change." He rose, waving his hands. His face shone with perspiration. "Hell, kid, don't

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you suppose *I* like that guy, too? Do you think you're the only guy around here that feels terrible about it?"

McGarvey, ordinarily, never took the trouble to do any real thinking. Ordinarily it wasn't necessary. Morton had plenty of brains for the two of them; and McGarvey's chief assets were his strength and his boundless self-confidence. But now Morton wasn't here, and McGarvey had to think for himself.

Mike DeLong was in Miami, in some not obvious place. With him were Phil Masterson and a man named Joe —at least these two, probably more. DeLong was planning a big crime, and Lester Washburne had made all preliminary arrangements, DeLong supervising them by remote control.

All right. Now DeLong, according to all available dope, was first and foremost a stick-up artist. He was a big-timer, no punk. When he walked into a place, gun in hand, everything had been carefully arranged in advance, the plant boxed. The take estimated. The take must be big.

Well, where could a hold-up man get a lot of money in Miami?

The gambling spots were out. They were much too well protected by their own guards. Nobody but a fool, which DeLong wasn't, would try to stick up one of the gambling joints.

What else? A private party of some sort?

McGarvey went back to the Captain's office.

"Say, Edward T. Reilly's tossing a big blow-out tonight out in his shack on Bayshore Drive, isn't he?"

"He is. Didn't you get an invitation? My, my!" Montgomery answered the telephone, listened to a report that no sign had been found of Morton, told the caller to keep looking, hung up. "Are you still here?" he asked McGarvey.

"Did Reilly ask for police protection for that party? There must be a powerful lot of jack represented there. Practically all of them millionaires, and that racing crowd goes in for diamonds by the crate."

"Reilly didn't ask, but I called him up and suggested I send a couple of plainsclothes men around. He said thanks but don't bother. Said he's got his own watchman and servants."

"Mike DeLong *could* be planning to stick up that party."

"Yes, and I *could* be Queen of the May, except that I haven't got time. Hell, Garv, that Reilly blow-off is a big function! There'll be fifty or sixty guests and darn near as many chauffeurs, plus all the help. A stick-up mob couldn't handle that. It'd take a regiment!"

"Just the same," McGarvey said, reaching, "I think I'll give the Reilly house a ring."

A minute later he hung up, looking significantly at Montgomery. Montgomery looked annoyed at first, then puzzled, finally alarmed.

"The operator," McGarvey informed, "says the Reilly phone seems to be out of order."

Montgomery rose, reaching for his hat.

"Maybe you're right at that. Maybe we better go out and take a little look anyway, huh?"

THEY did not drive into the huge estate of the oil king. Instead they parked a block away, and walked. The house, a show place even in that neighborhood of show places, was brilliantly lighted. An orchestra was playing conscientiously but without verve.

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"Can't say as I think much of their music. If I had a hundredth part of the jack Edward T. Reilly has," growled McGarvey, "I could certainly hire a better orchestra than that."

He didn't know then, of course, that the musicians were nervous because they faced a mean little man with a long and shiny Luger. They didn't want to play at all. But they didn't dare to stop.

A watchman came out of a gate-house, calling after McGarvey and Montgomery. They stopped. They couldn't see the fellow well, under the trees there.

"Where are you gentlemen going, may I ask?"

"Going to the party. Any objections?"

"You're not"—he eyed their clothes with disfavor—"you're not trying to tell me that you're invited guests?"

"No," said Montgomery, "we happen to be cops. What of it?"

"Oh, in that case—"

The watchman reached for a pistol. He never got it clear of the holster. The front sight caught—which was another example of the McGarvey luck. For McGarvey, who lunged at the man, certainly deserved to be killed. McGarvey's fist hit jawbone, and the man sat down.

He might have been hit with a sledge hammer. It wouldn't have hurt any more.

"Now that was very pretty," a strange voice said. "But cut it out—and stick your hands up!"

They were two young men, no older than McGarvey. They didn't look tough. They were quiet, well dressed. One wore glasses. And they both held automatics.

They had come out of the shrubbery which bordered the drive.

"Couple of Mike's boys, huh?" said Montgomery.

McGarvey didn't move. He was too sore.

"Mike DeLong?" asked the one with glasses. "We thought *you* were working for him."

"If you'll stick a paw into my right coat pocket," Montgomery said, "you'll find a police shield. We're cops."

The man with glasses, an efficient cuss, found the shield, examined it, replaced it. He lowered his gun.

"Sorry, cops. A little misunderstanding. We thought you were part of the mob. You can put your hands down now."

McGarvey growled: "I never put mine up!"

"Some day," said the man with glasses, "you're going to get yourself killed, acting that way."

"Would you care to try it?"

"I would not. I've got too much to do. Do you know that Mike DeLong is in that house with at least ten men?"

"Fine," said McGarvey, turning toward the house. "I've been looking for that guy."

Montgomery grabbed him, held him.

"Now wait a minute! Go barging in there now and somebody'll get killed!"

"Well, what are you going to do—stand here and wait for DeLong to finish the job?"

"We need more men. We want a squad."

The man with glasses said: "We've got five more coming. They ought to be here any minute."

"Incidentally," said McGarvey, "who the hell *are* you two guys?"

"Didn't I mention that? We're Federals. F. B. I."

"Oh, G-men?"

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"If you like that name. We don't, personally."

"And how come you're on Mike DeLong's tail?"

"We got a tip three weeks ago that Mike was planning a snatch. Something new, for him. We couldn't pick him up, having no real charge, and we didn't know who was to be kidnaped nor where it was to happen. So we just planted ourselves on Mike's doorstep. He didn't like it, but he couldn't get rid of us. We tapped his telephone and examined his mail and watched every move he made. Last week he started a really serious effort to shake us. Flew to California and came back by jerky stages. We held on as far as Louisville, and there he slipped us. Meanwhile he'd been running a classified ad in every city, obviously communicating with his gang. Some of the papers would have rejected them because of the code words, but we persuaded them to take them. We wanted to know what Mike was writing, to see if that would help us locate the job he planned. It didn't—for quite a while. Only yesterday the boys in Washington gave us an interpretation of those code words. Dwrm Lacjac, they said, meant 'Kill Morton.' Well, Mike's record shows he was arrested for Illinois by a Sergeant Morton here in Miami seven-eight years ago. That would mean he'd be afraid of this man Morton, who I understand is a pretty smart cop—"

"You're darn tootin' he is!"

"So we figured it for Miami, and we guessed Edward T. Reilly. And it seems we were right. We were just coming here, a little while ago, to see if everything was all right with Reilly, when Mike and his pals drove up, three large touring cars of them, all wearing masks. I suppose this watchman is part of the gang. The real watchman must have been put out of the way before we arrived."

McGarvey looked at the house, a great white mansion pricked brilliantly with yellow lights. The music was pauseless and without spirit. Yet otherwise the house was curiously quiet. There was no sound of dancing, no laughter, no clink of glasses, of popping of corks. Beyond, the Bay was a silver charger of vast size.

"So Mike DeLong's in there, huh?" McGarvey sounded as though he were talking to himself. "Well, I want to see that guy!"

Again he started for the house, and again the captain grabbed him.

"You can't charge that outfit single-handed! They won't get away without coming down this drive. Let's at least wait until these other G-men arrive."

"I'm not waiting for anything or anybody," McGarvey said.

He shook himself free, started running up the drive.

The man with glasses cried: "He'll be slaughtered! They got machine guns in there! They'll cut him to pieces!"

McGarvey, however, didn't get to the house. He hadn't gone more than a few yards when all hell broke loose.

A scream started it—a high, long, horrible scream—as some female guest who had been petrified by the guns, suddenly recovered her vocal cords.

The music stopped. A window was smashed, then another. Men shouted; and there were many more screams to echo that first one. A Thompson gun stuttered—a sound like the ripping of heavy canvas. At least three other guns too were fired several times.

Men poured out of the house, men with hats pulled low, with black masks

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on their faces. Some of them carried smoking pistols. Two had machine guns.

The three large touring cars had been parked directly in front of the house, facing down the drive. Now they roared into action. They came down the drive, rocking back and forth, swishing gravel under their spinning wheels. Not one of them showed a light.

It all happened very fast. Montgomery and the two G-men threw themselves on their bellies beside the drive and started shooting. McGarvey just stood there, his legs spread wide, and emptied his gun. He was a perfect target. And the cars blazed with gunfire; lead wheeled viciously, clipping through trees and bushes; but somehow, miraculously, McGarvey wasn't touched.

The cars rocketed out of the estate, turned north, thundered away. And things became hideously quiet. Leaves, cut from trees by the bullets, drifted earthward, turning lazily, back and forth. . . . A servant in livery, tearing adhesive tape from his mouth, came racing down the drive.

"They've got Mr. Reilly! They've kidnaped Mr. Reilly!"

CHAPTER VI

Hideout

MIKE DELONG, smiling a little, lounged into the room, which was utterly bare. The room was dark, though this was mid-afternoon. The windows were boarded. Morton lay flat in a corner, his wrists handcuffed in front of him, his ankles tied with thin hard cord. There was tape on his mouth.

Mike DeLong smiled, nodding pleasantly.

"They been treating you all right, Sergeant?"

He leaned; and with a gesture almost delicate he ripped the tape from Morton's mouth. It made tears come to Morton's eyes.

Morton worked his lips. He didn't look mad, only tired.

After a while he asked: "What was that you said just now?"

"I asked if the boys had been treating you all right."

"Oh, I guess so. One of them was in here kicking my ribs a little while ago, but I'm still able to breathe. It'd be nice to have something to eat, though."

"I'll fix it up for you. We got plenty grub here, God knows! Enough to last the whole bunch of us at least two weeks. I figured there was no sense taking chances. The snatch has made an awful stink, and I think Hoover must have sent every Boy Scout in the department down here."

"They take kidnaping seriously, those G-men."

"Well, in a way," said DeLong, "you can't blame them."

"I suppose they're still searching the Everglades?"

DeLong chuckled.

"Yeah, they're still there. Just because the cars were ditched out on the Okeechobee Road. So the feds are trying to look behind every blade of sawgrass in the place. I hope it makes them happy."

"There was an awful lot of shooting."

"Sure. Some of the boys got excited. And then there were a few cops or something down near the road. They got our watchman. A giant by the name of McGarvey clouted him cold."

"Also," Morton reminded, "we've got your boxer, Lester Washburne."

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"Yeah. But he's going to be sprung, just like the watchman."

"Who says so?"

"I say so, Sergeant. When we get this ransom matter cleaned up, we're going to do some dickering. Washy and the watchman get sprung, with time to lam, or else we ship Wentworth L. Morton home in sections—beginning with the ears."

"That's why I'm alive now?"

"That's why. Might need you to sign a note or something."

"You won't let me go anyway, no matter what happens. You couldn't afford to, after I've seen so many of you."

"Absolutely. But *they* won't know that, Sergeant."

He went to a window, peered through a crack in the heavy storm shutters. He chuckled again. He was very pleased with himself. The raid on the Reilly ball had netted jewelry valued by the newspapers at a quarter of a million dollars, and which actually would bring about forty thousand to DeLong, fence prices. It would take care of the boys, and expenses. The big dough was yet to come. Two hundred thousand dollars, cold and old cash, was what he was going to ask for the return of Edward T. Reilly. And he was going to get it! Two hundred thousand dollars is a lot of money.

So Mike DeLong chuckled. He jerked his head, without turning.

"Look. Here's your pal out there now—the big cluck that smacked down our watchman. Give a look."

Morton asked bitterly: "How?"

"'Scuse it please! Forgot you were wrapped up." He put hands under Morton's shoulders, lifted suddenly and violently. Morton was no lightweight; but DeLong, deceptively strong, lifted him as though he were a doll. He carried him to the window. "Only no yells, of course. Otherwise I blow the spine apart." He thrust the muzzle of a pistol against Morton's backbone, pressing hard. "See him?"

They were on the second floor of a house owned by a breakfast cereal magnate who had not either occupied or rented it for several seasons. They were on the south side of the house, facing the house next door, which was that of Edward T. Reilly.

For the three cars abandoned in the Everglades were bluff. All except three members of the hold-up party, one at each wheel, had in fact jumped out of the cars in front of the breakfast cereal magnate's establishment, and had quietly entered that house. All previously arranged, of course, and the single caretaker handsomely bribed. Washburne had done the work, at DeLong's dictation.

The three drivers, after abandoning the cars at a prearranged spot, had climbed into a harmless-looking old Ford and quietly driven back into the city as police cars shrieked past them.

So that Morton, propped against the storm shutter, looked out over a garden wall separating the two estates and saw the activity on the Reilly property. There was something rather military about the scene. Cars came and went in businesslike fashion. Motorcycle cops dashed up, dashed away. There photographers, and of course reporters. There were dozens of policemen, some in uniform, some of them in plainclothes. From the window Morton could see the veranda of the Reilly mansion. He could see young McGarvey there, red-faced, huge-handed, waving his arms in a frenzy of excitement while he argued with a G-man.

It was a temptation to yell, though it is doubtful that anybody would have

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heard him anyway. But Mike DeLong pushed hard with the gun, and Morton was still.

DeLong continued to chuckle.

"You flatfeet have been the ones to hang around here. The feds are mostly scattered both sides of the Okeechobee Road. Hell, they've hired damn near every Seminole in Florida to guide them. In dugouts. Well, I hope none of them get their feet wet out there."

He took a square of adhesive tape from his pocket, tore off the tissue paper, and slapped it suddenly and very violently over Morton's mouth. Morton's gray eyes remained calm.

"I'll bring you that food later, if I happen to think of it."

He pushed Morton, who, ankles bound, wrists cuffed, hit the floor with a thump.

"Knock you out?" But DeLong didn't seem to be really interested. "Well, I'll see you later, Sergeant."

THE house was dusty, empty, dreary. DeLong's footsteps echoed weirdly as he walked. He looked into another bedroom, saw Edward T. Reilly bound and gagged, his eyes bandaged, lying on the floor. Nearby was a thin pimply-faced youth who sat on a crate and carelessly held an enormous black automatic.

"Still cold?"

"Yeah. That was an awful big shot."

"Well, keep your eye on him just the same. He's too rich for us to take any chances with him. See you later. I'll send up Georgie to relieve you in a little while."

"Do that," the pimply-faced youth said with feeling. "I'd like to get back to that pinochle before it gets dark. I'm behind four bits."

The only room in the house which contained any furniture was the kitchen, where the estate watchman, who lived in a gate house down by the road, sometimes sat around. There were four men seated at a table in the kitchen, three of them drinking and playing pinochle, the fourth just drinking. Mike DeLong stood for a minute or two, fists on hips, shaking his head.

"How 'bout some bridge? Pinochle's a lousy game. Bridge is a good game."

"Bridge is lousy."

The non-player rose suddenly, spilling part of his drink. He was smallish, no more than a kid, and scared. His nerves were bad, in reaction from the strain of the crime the previous night. His eyes were hollow of madness, his cheeks taut with panic. In addition, he was drunk.

"Say, this is getting me nuts, Mike. Can't we go out for a little walk instead of staying here all the time?"

"No."

"Not even just a walk around the house? Nobody'd see me."

"Didn't I say no? Hell, you better get used to it, Georgie. We're likely to be here for a couple of weeks."

But Georgie was hysterical. Fright made his voice screechy. The nervous strain, the waiting in this echo-ridden house of emptiness, was too much for him. He couldn't take it. Now he grabbed Mike DeLong by the coat lapels, shook him.

"I tell you I can't stand it! I'll go *nuts!* Listen, if you won't let me—"

DeLong, almost negligently, drew a revolver, twirled it so that his hand gripped the barrel, and brought the butt down on the very top of Georgie's head. It was no love tap. It was a full-armed husky wallop. Georgie dropped like a dead man, which is just what he was. His skull was broken.

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Mike DeLong examined him briefly, carelessly.

"Guess I hit too hard." He lighted a cigarette. "Well, he had it coming. I was afraid all the time that Georgie might give us trouble. One less to split with."

He took the corpse by the back of the collar, hauled it unceremoniously across the kitchen floor to the door of the cellar. He opened the door, shoved the corpse inside. The men seated at the table could hear it thump and thud its way down the steps.

Mike DeLong strolled back to the table, a cigarette jutting out of a corner of his mouth, his head cocked to one side to keep smoke from getting into his eyes. He sat down, reached for a deck of cards which was not in use, started to play solitaire.

"You guys and your pinochle," he growled. "Why don't you learn to play bridge some time? Bridge's a good game."

Nobody said anything about Georgie. The play continued for an hour and a half in utter silence. Then the room, which had previously been dim, the windows being boarded, with the coming of night became definitely dark. Further play was not possible. The pinochle game folded up; and presently Mike DeLong pushed cards away from him in disgust.

A man got up, went into the next room, struck a match. Soon he returned with three lighted cigarettes. He didn't offer Mike DeLong one.

DeLong had a strict rule against showing a light. They would be obliged to sit the night through, each night through, in utter darkness. He would not even permit them to light cigarettes in the kitchen or in any room where there were windows. They had to go into the butler's pantry to do that. There were too many cops around, DeLong had pointed out. As long as this house remained silent, blank, nobody would think of it. But let a light show for an instant through the cracks or one of those shutters, and it was conceivable that some nosy cop might just happen to be looking that way, and see it, and wonder, and investigate.

The night was going to be a long one, they knew; and the darkness in this great empty house made them twitchy. They spoke in whispers when they spoke at all, sometimes glancing sideways at Mike DeLong, who was a dim shadow, alone, at the far end of the table. Now and then a man would get up, feel his way out to the butler's pantry, light cigarettes for the others, excepting DeLong, and return with them. The cigarettes at least were friendly, making pleasant little glows in the darkness, and briefly showing the men one another's faces.

At last—it was perhaps nine o'clock—Mike DeLong arose, yawned soundlessly, went to the drainboard, which was piled high with canned goods. Without knowing what it contained, or caring, he picked a can at large, and picked up also a can-opener and spoon.

"Promised that cop something to eat," he mumbled. "Forgot about it till just now. I'll be back in a little while. Remember what I said about lights!"

He was gone, quiet as a shadow.

WENTWORTH L. MORTON, too, was no more than a shadow in the room upstairs. A certain amount of wan moonlight drizzled in through the cracks in the shutters—just enough to show Morton lying underneath one of the windows—but DeLong knew there was nothing else in the room, so he walked with

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confidence. He opened the can; it turned out to be tomatoes. He took off Morton's mouth tape, handed Morton the can and the spoon.

"Help yourself, Sergeant. Sorry we can't supply any Mazda. Risky."

It was some time before Morton managed to talk. That tape was nasty stuff and he'd had it on his mouth almost continuously for fourteen or fifteen hours. At last he muttered:

"You might at least prop me up against the wall here. How do you expect me to eat when I'm lying flat on my back?"

"O-*kay!* Upsy-daisy!"

He got Morton under the arms, hoisted him to a sitting position.

Morton dropped the can and the spoon, and his hands, manacled at the wrists, snaked under DeLong's coat, snatched DeLong's revolver from the shoulder holster.

"Hold it, Mike!"

DeLong said slowly, juicily: "Sap! Don't you think I figured you might try something like that? Go ahead—try to shoot!"

The muzzle was against DeLong's breast. Morton pursed his lips, squeezed the trigger. The hammer rose and fell. He squeezed a second and third time, a fourth. He was snapping an empty gun.

"Sap!" the gunman said again. He put the heel of his hand against Morton's chin, pushed Morton's head back so that it slammed against the wall. "Well, if you want to act that way, I guess maybe we better put you away after all. Serves you right."

He had another gun, a small automatic on his right hip, but he was not eager to use it. This thing must be done quietly. He snatched the can-opener, which was new and sharp. He lunged at Morton.

Morton felt rather than saw the blow coming. Stunned, he lurched to one side. The can-opener cut his coat, dug into his breast a little, slashingly. He felt the warmth of blood there. DeLong pulled it back for another, more careful blow.

"You might as well sit still and take it, copper."

Then DeLong, who was no coward, got a real scare. The scare of his life. A pair of mighty arms slid around him from behind, and he was lifted as easily as a little earlier he had lifted Sergeant Morton. He didn't yell, but this was not because he kept his head: it was because he *couldn't* yell, one of the arms being around his neck, tightening against his windpipe. He kicked backward, and hit nothing. He tried to reach the gun at his right hip, but his hand was torn away from it. He was lifted higher, shaken.

DeLong wasn't a weakling himself, but strength like this was unbelievable, not human. He was shaken like a rag doll—and by somebody or something he couldn't even see.

Suddenly he was released. Dizzy, gurgling, he turned. He didn't turn of his own free will—he was spun around.

Something touched his jaw, and the darkness was complete. He started to fall, and those huge arms caught him again and lowered him carefully to the floor. But he didn't know about this latter part of the process, because at that time he didn't know anything at all.

CHAPTER VII

Dumbbell's Prize

THE whole business had not taken more than a minute and had not made any sound at all. Even the feet of the men as they moved were

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noiseless, the dust which was thick on the floor muffled them.

After some silence Morton said querulously: "Who the hell are you? I can't see you."

"Are you all right, Mort? Did they hurt you?"

"*Garv!*"

"Sh-sh! It's not a raid. I'm here alone."

Even at a moment like this Morton was the teacher, the fathery one.

"You fool! Don't you know there's half a dozen gunmen in this place!"

"I know it now—yes. I didn't when I came here. Just took a chance. Do you know where you are, Mort?"

"Sure. I'm next door to the Reilly house. And do you mean to tell me that of all the guys investigating this snatch, city and Federal both, you're the only one bright enough to have figured out that Mike DeLong would pull a fast one like that?"

"I guess I must be. That Everglades stunt didn't seem to wash. Too obvious. And anyway, why search out there? I guess those G-men don't know what the Everglades amount to. You could search them for years and not cover half of them. So I figured it must be somewhere else, and I tried to think of where I'd hide if I was pulling a hold-up and snatch like that. I figured that the less distance I went or drove, the better. Well, across the street's the Wilkinson mansion, and that's occupied. The Messer dump's on the south side of Reilly and that's occupied, too. But this place has been empty all season and I found out that there was nobody here but a watchman. I also found out, from the Walker-Skag people, that they'd delivered five or six cases of assorted canned goods here last week. Of course the watchman could be stocking up for himself. . . . He *could* be. But anyway I thought I'd come snooping as soon as it got dark. I busted into the watchman's cottage—"

He broke off when Morton's hands went over his mouth. He nodded slowly, taking the hands up and down. He slipped away.

A blurred shadow, not large, had appeared in the doorway. The whine of the pimply-faced youth reached Morton and McGarvey:

"Say, Mike, I thought you said you'd send up Georgie to relieve me? Do I have to sit and watch this guy all ni—"

The finish was a hollow, sucking sound, then a thud as the pimply-faced youth hit the floor. Then there was silence.

Morton whispered: "Where'd you smack him?"

"In the tummy. It ought to keep him quiet for a while."

"*Quiet!* It's likely to kill him, the way you slug!"

"Well?"

McGarvey took pistols from both of the men. For all his size, he could move like a cat. He found the handcuff key in one of DeLong's pockets. He was listening all this while, but there was no sound downstairs. He started to work on the handcuffs.

"The only thing funny I found in the watchman's cottage was twelve hundred in cash—which is a lot for a man like him. And I didn't find more than three or four cans of food."

Morton asked angrily: "Why the hell didn't you go back and get a squad? Riot guns, tear gas, all the rest of it?"

McGarvey had the handcuffs off now and was clicking them on the two prostrate figures, clipping together the right wrist of each. He returned to Morton,

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started to work on Morton's ankles while the Sergeant rubbed his wrists to restore circulation.

"Mort," McGarvey answered quietly, "I'm on this job to get you out. If I happen to save any billionaires in the process, that's another matter. But it's you I came after."

"You should have brought a squad."

"Suppose I did? And suppose the gang really is hiding out here? That's going to mean a flock of dead gangsters before long, but it's also going to mean a dead *you!*"

"All right. Keep that voice down."

Morton rose, freed. He walked up and down the room, waving his arms like windmills, kicking with his legs.

"So I prowled in back here, and I sniffed cigarettes. The watchman didn't have any cigarettes or any cigarette ashes down in the cottage. He's a pipe smoker. Used strong tobacco. But this was cigarettes I was smelling in back of the house here.

"All the windows were boarded up, so I went around to the side porch and shinnied up a pillar and got on the roof and found a window that was loose. I got in. I was crouching in the hall outside here, wondering what to do next, when along came DeLong.

"Edward T. Reilly," Morton whispered, "is somewhere down the hall in another room, and I think this kid you just pasted was the only one guarding him. But it might take us half an hour to find him, in a big house like this."

"Know your way around in here?"

"No. I was out of the picture when they brought me here, don't remember anything from the time they waylaid me up near St. Augustine to the time I came to right in this room. But I know from the way DeLong talked that the gang must be downstairs. Let's try to sneak out."

"My window?" McGarvey queried.

"Uh-uh. Shinnying up and down pillars may be easy enough for you, but I'm no kid any more. Besides, I'm stiff from being tied up so long. I'd make a noise, surer'n hell, and they'd have us in a spot where we couldn't shoot right. No, let's go downstairs and try one of the doors."

THE dust was kind, muffling their footsteps. McGarvey moved easily, wraithlike; but Morton, still dazed, his ears ringing, his whole body one colossal ache, stumbled a little at first. McGarvey tried to hold his arm, but Morton shook him off.

It was utterly dark in the hall, where there were no windows. They felt their way along a wall, found steps, descended.

They lingered through what was ordinarily a dining room, then through what might have been a butler's pantry. They couldn't see a thing.

Through another door—and they came upon the cigarettes.

The cigarettes stood out brilliantly against blackness, three tiny bright red blobs of flame.

Morton and McGarvey stopped. They were side by side, but obviously not visible to the three men who smoked in this kitchen. Yet they must have been heard. A voice called: "That you, Mike?"

Morton grunted "Uh-huh," and turned to go back into the dining room.

"Say, that don't sound like—"

A chair scraped, then another. Then one of them switched on a flash.

The beam fell full and fair upon the two detectives, just turning in retreat.

"Well, I'll be—"

Young McGarvey, for once, had sense enough to go down on one knee. Morton fell flat.

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Orange-red spurts of gunfire javelined the darkness. The noise was terrific. The flashlight fell to the floor, spun crazily, hit something, recoiled; and all this while its beam sprayed light first in one direction, then in another.

What advantage there was, except that of numbers, lay with the cops. In the first place, they had been gripping their pistols, ready for anything. In the second place, they were not silhouetted against what little moonlight penetrated through the cracks of shutters in the rear of the kitchen—and the gangsters were.

It was over very soon. It almost like one great blast, a single explosion.

Morton and McGarvey waited, McGarvey clicking back the hammer of his revolver with his thumb; he never had used DeLong's little gun at all.

Three figures were visible, one lying across the table, two on the floor.

McGarvey placed the automatic on the floor, went to his belly, wriggled back. He held the flash at arm's length, moving it. "I guess that does it, Mort."

They found Edward T. Reilly, untied him. He was unconscious, a dead weight, and not light. McGarvey threw him over his shoulders, fireman-fashion, and carried him downstairs. They broke open the front door. From the kitchen, using the flashlight, they took a bottle of whisky. Out on the front veranda, Morton drank deep of this, and sighed heavily, gratefully. McGarvey didn't drink. He never drank—didn't believe in it.

There was an ancient rocking chair on the porch, probably the property of the watchman. Morton sat in it, the prone Edward T. Reilly at his feet. McGarvey stood in the violated doorway, gun raised and ready.

They heard shouts from the Reilly house, the other side of the garden wall. The gunfire had been heard.

Morton and McGarvey didn't say anything for some time. Then Morton took another drink and grinned.

"I was just thinking. Half the G-men in the country falling all over themselves out there in the Everglades, sweating and steaming and ducking alligators and getting themselves all sliced up by sawgrass—and the whole Miami police department turning the town upside down—and what happens? The prize dumbbell of the force takes the trouble to sit down and dope the whole thing out for himself."

"Hey!"

"I know. I'll take it back, Garv. I *used* to think you were dumb, but I guess I must have been wrong."

McGarvey grinned, a big wide full Irish grin.

There's not much chance to exercise
While riding on a train.
But we just eat, then alkalize.
And never have a pain
ACID INDIGESTION
O DEAR! MY HEAD IS ACHING SO. I THINK I'LL HIKE FOR HOME -
I'D TAKE AN ALKA-SELTZER, FLO,-IT ALWAYS CLEARS MY DOME
HEADACHE
Be Wise— Alkalize
Alka-Seltzer
Alka-Seltzer Makes a sparkling alkalizing solution containing an analgesic (acetyl salicylate). You drink it and it gives prompt, pleasant relief for Headaches, Sour Stomach, Distress after Meals, Colds and other minor Aches and Pains
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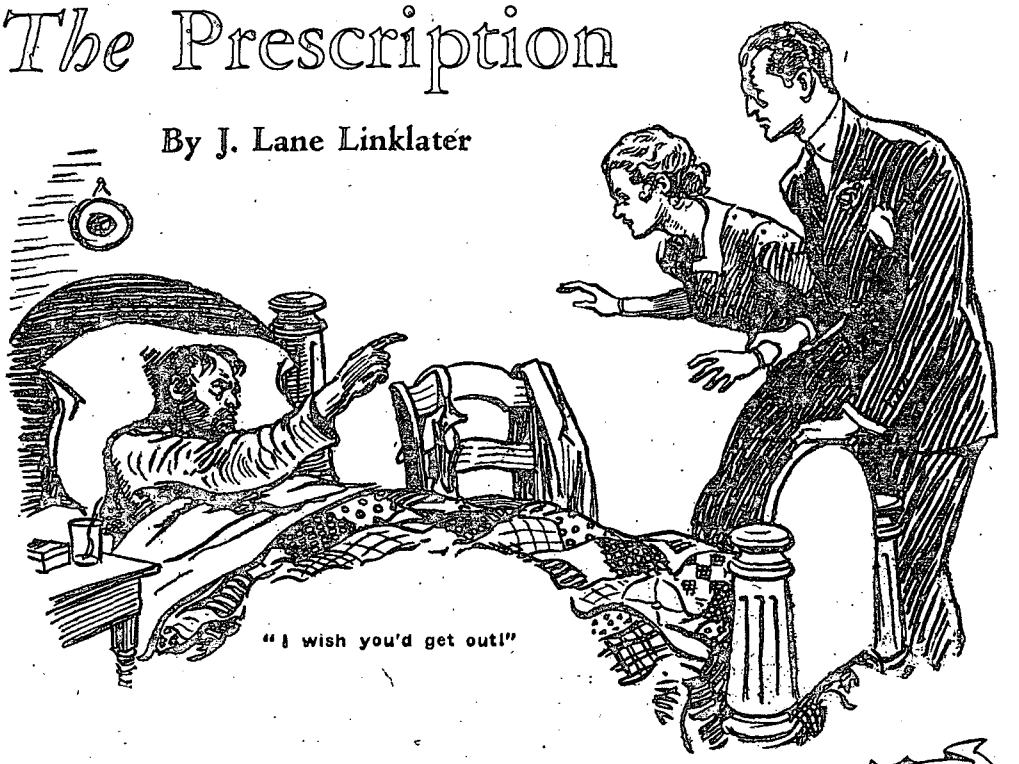
The Prescription

By J. Lane Linklater



Paul C. Pitt, That Debonair Outlaw, Risks the Noose in an Attempt to Save a Pretty Girl from Being a Bargain on the Auction Block

SPECIAL SHORT D F W

THE limousine, still gleaming in stately splendor in spite of the dust of several hours' driving, swept into the little town of Brixton. Paul C. Pitt, the handsome gentleman in the tonneau, spoke to the massive, meaty-faced chauffeur.

"We'll stop here, Dan. It's almost time for dinner. And it's a beautiful spot. The surrounding hills are covered with trees. And there are trees even down the main street. I like trees, Dan—"

"Yeah," grumbled Dan. "And it's a swell place for the law to catch up with us, boss. That monkey you outfoxed back in Slausen a coupla days ago will maybe get in touch with the local cops—"

"We did nothing really wrong, Dan," Pitt chided him smoothly. "It's fear, not conscience, that's worrying you." He sighed lightly. "In any case, life was made for beauty. We can't permit these ugly details to interfere with our worship of beauty. Just stop here in the middle of the block."

Dan brought the limousine to a stop against the rough curbing. Pitt sank back against the cushions, his keen but kindly gray eyes casually surveying the town.

"Beauty, hell!" muttered Dan. "It's dough you need. You make two or

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three grand just like that—then get rid of it just like that. Anyhow, there's nothing doing in a village like this. It's as dead as—"

"Dead? Not at all, Dan. Quiet, but not dead. And very beautiful. Where there's quiet, there's trouble. And where there's beauty, there's tragedy. No, Dan. We'll have dinner here in Brixton. But first we'll just sit here for a little while."

Dan's lips moved in profanely silent protest. He squirmed behind the wheel. But he knew that argument was useless. Dan liked to be lost to observation in the big cities: the smaller places, where Pitt and he were much more conspicuous, scared him. But Pitt invariably preferred the smaller towns.

Dan knew, too, that Pitt's ability to find interesting—and profitable—complications in unexpected places was no idle boast. With no more stock in trade than the limousine and the expensive baggage in it, they roamed the country aimlessly, stopping here and there with Pitt's own amazing intuition as their only apparent guide. Among the few who knew him, but rarely saw him, Pitt had a settled reputation for being able to discover slices of commanding human drama beneath the commonplace crust of ordinary human conduct.

Presently Dan turned complainingly. "There's an eating dump down on the corner, boss. I'm hungry as hell. And there ain't a thing doing around here—"

"Did you notice where we're parked, Dan?" Pitt cut in.

"Hell, no!" said Dan. "There ain't nothing—?"

"But there is, Dan. Just across the street is a doctor's office. You can see a lot by just watching a doctor's office."

He was silent then. A few pedestrians passed them occasionally, townsfolk, and stared curiously at the limousine and its unusual occupants. Pitt seemed not to notice them; he had eyes only for the door of the doctor's office. The office was a ground-floor room, like a small store. Inside the grimy window, a blind was drawn low. The worn letters on the window said:

RICHARD HOLLY, M. D.

Presently a man came along, hurried into the doctor's office. He was strong-looking, perhaps a farmer. His face was distorted, as if in pain. In a few minutes he came out again, hurried away.

"There goes a guy," offered Dan, "what looks as if he's in trouble."

Pitt chuckled. "You can't judge," he said, "by the expression on a man's face. If it had been a woman, I might have agreed, since women are more stalwart than men, Dan. That chap probably just had an ordinary stomach ache. No, I wouldn't pick him—"

HE stopped abruptly. The doctor's door had opened again, and two people emerged; a middle-aged man and a very young woman. Apparently they had been in the office for some time. The man was short and squat, his complexion dark, his eyes small and crafty, his nose hooked, his under lip protruding greedily. The girl was pale, but otherwise placid in manner; a small trim girl, lips sensitive, well-formed nose, eyes the clear blue of sincerity.

Behind them came another man, in shirtsleeves, obviously the doctor himself. They talked with him a few minutes. Dr. Holly's weak face seemed flushed, his graying hair unkempt.

Then the man and the girl got in a car at the curb and drove away. The

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doctor reëntered his office, closed the door.

"Dan," exclaimed Pitt, softly, "*there* is something!"

"I didn't see nothing," growled Dan.

"But there was much to see," Pitt retorted, "for one who will use the seventh sense of discernment. There were three people. The man was gross, predatory, selfish, and—if I am any judge—he was swelling with triumph! The girl was a fine type, Dan, thoroughly unselfish and idealistic—and weighted down with defeat, although too courageous to display it."

"Okay," said Dan, hopelessly. "Maybe you got the sawbones sized up, too?"

"Just a tool, Dan. And Dr. Holly is even now at least half intoxicated—one could see that from here." He paused, thoughtfully. "Yes, a very interesting set-up."

"But where is there any dough in it?" objected Dan. "You got to have dough—"

"As you should know, Dan," Pitt reproved him, "my creed is that if we attempt something beneficial to others, the money question will take care of itself. That is," he added, smiling, "with the help of a little conniving."

"You win," conceded Dan. "Can we go eat now?"

"I'll have a little drink first," said Pitt.

"But I don't see no grog shop—"

"I imagine," said Pitt, "that the doctor will take care of me." He stepped out to the sidewalk. "Keep your eyes open, Dan."

He strode across the street, his tall, immaculately-clad form moving with easy grace. It seemed to Dan, as he watched, that everyone in sight had stopped to look at the gracious, imposing stranger with the dominating, Roman-featured face. In a moment, Pitt had vanished into the doctor's office. It was nearly half an hour before he reappeared and rejoined Dan in the limousine.

"A very interesting case, Dan," Pitt commented.

Dan groaned. He was sure now that there was no chance of getting out of Brixton until Pitt had followed through to the end.

"You got the snifter, huh?" he queried.

"One," said Pitt. "And the doctor took three. He'd already had several, so it was no trouble to get him to talk."

"He told you everything, huh?"

"No, not everything. But I found out about the man and the girl. The man's name is Eli North. He's the local money-lender. He'll lend money on anything from an opal to a potato farm. A very unpleasant person, Dan."

"Did he lend money to the dame?"

"No. To her foster-father, Dan. Or, at least, this Eli North got the girl's foster-father, whose name is Roscoe Street, in some sort of a deal. Now, Mr. Street is in what you call a serious jam."

"So what?" growled Dan.

"Eli North wants the girl, of course. She's the price he asks for releasing her foster-father, with whom she lives, having no parents of her own."

"She should tell him," said Dan decisively, "to go to hell."

Pitt shook his head. "But she's loyal to her foster-father, who, the doctor tells me, is in very bad shape—so bad, indeed, that a shock might easily kill him."

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"She's in a spot," agreed Dan. "But what the hell—?"

"The money-lender is rushing things," mused Pitt. "The wedding is set for tomorrow noon."

Dan stared. "Say, did the sawbones tell you all this?"

Pitt chuckled. "Not in so many words, Dan. But he told me more than he realized, the facts from which I could easily deduce the truth. Incidentally, I left the doctor sound asleep."

"Drunk, huh?"

"Not only that, Dan. I took the liberty of adding something to his last drink! something from his own supplies. You see, I wanted a few minutes to look about undisturbed."

"But you didn't find no dough," charged Dan, a bit belligerently.

"Of course not. But there were some things that looked more like an actor's equipment than a doctor's."

"Well," complained Dan, "I don't see no chance to pick up any dough from that mess."

"But we might be able," Pitt contended, "to do the girl some good. By the way, there's something resembling a hotel a little farther down the street. We can arrange for rooms there, and no doubt get some dinner."

II

IT was a small and shabby hotel, and the dinner wasn't very good, but Paul C. Pitt accepted the limited service graciously and paid for it generously. After dinner, Pitt and Dan settled in two adjoining rooms.

"Jeez, boss," Dan groaned, "I wish we could get away from here. It gives me the willies—"

"Some time tomorrow, Dan," Pitt said. "This evening, I must see Miss Street and her foster-father. Please remember, in case anyone should ask you, that I'm a doctor of medicine—Dr. Pitt, of New York."

"It ain't the first time," Dan retorted, "you been a doctor. Over in Wassonville last week you was a magician. And a few days before that you was a explorer from China. I don't see how you get away with—"

"But tonight," Pitt said, smiling, "I'm plain Doctor Pitt. Not too plain, either. Indeed, I think that Dr. Holly believes me to be a physician of great distinction from New York—alcohol is a great aid to the imagination, Dan. However, I'll walk over to Mr. Street's house now. I understood that it's not far."

Dan sat down to an uneasy game of solitaire as Pitt left. It took Pitt's long legs not over ten minutes to stroll across to the edge of town where the Street house was located. The house was larger than most of its neighbors, but obviously run down. He knocked on the door.

The door opened. The pale-faced girl was looking up at him.

Pitt smiled at her. "You are Miss Street?"

"Yes, sir." Her voice was subdued. "What can I do for you?"

"I'm Dr. Pitt, of New York. I've been talking to your Dr. Holly about your foster-father. I'm stopping overnight in your town, and your father's case interested me. I thought perhaps I'd be able to do him some good."

The girl smiled, not very hopefully. "Thank you. Will you step in?"

In a moment, Pitt was in a small living room with her. "Perhaps we'd better go right upstairs," she suggested.

"In a few moments," Pitt agreed. "First, I'd like to know a little more about your father's case. Has he been ill long?"

"About a month, sir. Then he was

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taken down with a heart attack. He's been in bed since, and he looks very bad."

Pitt wagged his head. "Pardon the digression," he observed, brightening, "but Dr. Holly tells me that you're to be married tomorrow."

The girl seemed to tense, but she remained passive.

"Tomorrow noon," she said.

"To a Mr. North, I understand," Pitt went on smoothly. "I happened to see him on the street this afternoon." Pitt gazed at her steadily. "I should think that a pretty girl like you would have had other suitors."

Bessie Street smiled wanly. "I—I had rather expected to marry a boy I went to school with. His name is Douglas Chappin. But—well, I guess that's all over."

"What happened to him?" queried Pitt.

"He went away some time ago. You see, he had no money. And he decided to go to medical college. He's just finishing his training now, at the hospital over at Canding, and he—oh, I'm sorry, but what's the use of talking about that?"

She seemed on the verge of tears.

"And now you're marrying someone else!" Pitt's voice was gently reproving. "When is he expected back here?"

"Sometime tomorrow. But I—I—"

The girl's voice broke suddenly. Pitt took her by the arm. "We'll see your father now," he said.

She led him up the stairs to the upper floor. Just outside a door she stopped. "We keep things as quiet as possible," she whispered. "And the room is quite dark. You see, light bothers father a lot."

She pushed open the door. Pitt followed her in. The room was almost dark. One small light in a far corner threw rays across the room, played weirdly on the haggard face of the man in bed.

The man stirred, stared at Pitt out of sunken eyes.

"Father," said the girl in a low voice, "this is Dr. Pitt of New York. He's been talking to Dr. Holly about you, and thought he might be able to help—"

"He can't help me," snapped the man querulously. "I know what's the matter with me. Holly is good enough for me." He stared at Pitt again. "Did Holly *send* you to me?"

"Not quite," admitted Pitt pleasantly. "Coming to see you was really my own idea. I hope you don't mind."

"But I do mind. And I wish you'd get out!"

Pitt ignored the order. "Your hands," he chided the man with sudden curtness, "are dirty! They should be kept clean—"

"Get out!" Street spat the words at him.

"Now, Father," protested the girl, "that's really not the way—"

"I know what I'm doing," argued the man angrily. "Get out!"

THE girl looked at Pitt appealingly. Pitt, standing over the bed, seemed quite unperturbed. Presently he turned to the girl, took her by the arm again, and without a word walked with her to the door. Out in the hall, he closed the door.

"How often does Dr. Holly visit your father?" he said very quietly.

"He comes every morning at eight o'clock, before father has his breakfast."

Pitt nodded. "Get me," he said, "a small pan of warm water and some soap," he said.

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The girl seemed uncertain for a moment. She gazed up at Pitt, and found something reassuring in Pitt's gaze. She hurried noiselessly down the stairs and returned in a few minutes with the water and soap.

"You'd better wait outside," Pitt told her.

He grasped the knob, shoved open the door without a sound, disappeared inside. The door closed behind him. The girl, waiting anxiously, heard a startled exclamation in the room in a few moments, and her father's voice raised angrily. The voice subsided quickly, and for a little while there was only a murmur.

The door opened again presently. Pitt emerged, closed the door behind him.

"How is he?" gasped the girl.

"Just now," Pitt admitted calmly, "he's feeling worse!"

The girl caught her breath. "Worse! But what did you do? What—?"

"But I wouldn't worry, if I were you," Pitt told her. "Indeed, I think he'll be much better — after you're married."

"Yes," whispered the girl. "I know that. Dr. Holly told me that, too. But—"

She stopped suddenly. In the room there were sounds of feet thudding toward the door. Then came the noise of a key rasping in the lock.

The girl looked up at Pitt, a little wildly. "He—he's locking himself in!"

"As I expected," murmured Pitt. "Don't worry about that, either. Will you show me out now?"

Bessie Street led the way downstairs again. At the front door, Pitt stopped. "Pardon my freedom, Miss Street," he said, "but isn't it true that the man you're planning to marry tomorrow—this Eli North—has some powerful financial advantage over your father?"

"Why, I—well, I don't know if I should—"

"I should know," Pitt said firmly, "if I'm to be of any help."

"Well, yes," admitted the girl. "Father owes Eli fifteen thousand dollars. He has father's note—"

"Fifteen thousand!" Pitt repeated. "And of course he'll destroy the note when you marry him?"

"I think that's the understanding." Even in the dim light, the flush on her cheek was perceptible. "It's silly! I'm not worth any such sum! I—"

"You," returned Pitt, warmly, "are worth ten thousand times that! For that matter, I'm inclined to think that Eli North will pay a little more than that."

He pushed open the door. The girl, apparently, noticed for the first time that he was holding a sheet of note paper in his hand. Her position, at his elbow, enabled her to glimpse it.

"Pardon me," she said diffidently, "but that paper—I couldn't help noticing it."

Pitt shrugged. "It's in the nature of a prescription," he said.

"But it's in father's handwriting!"

"To be sure," said Pitt. "He just gave it to me."

Bessie Street looked amazed. "You mean he's writing a prescription for himself?"

Pitt's eyes were half closed. "The prescription," he said, "is for the doctor! Well, don't worry too much, my dear. Tomorrow may be better than today. Goodnight."

The girl watched him wistfully from the doorway as she strode down the garden walk to the street. He reached

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the hotel in a few minutes, found Dan nervously shuffling cards. . . .

PITT sank into a chair. "I found the girl to be even more delightful than I had thought, Dan," he said softly. "She's a girl of the kind that you and I can never be worthy of. She's beautiful, true—"

"Yeah?" scowled Dan, unimpressed. "But how about dough?"

"She has no money, Dan. Nobody connected with the case has any money—except Eli North." He glanced at his watch. "I think I'll run over and see Dr. Holly. He should be out of his stupor by this time."

"What the hell," growled Dan, "can you get out of him?"

"I have a prescription," Pitt said calmly, "for him! And perhaps he, in turn, will give me a prescription for Mr. North!"

"But this guy North don't even know you."

Pitt chuckled. "And *he* doesn't know about the prescription yet."

"I don't get you," Dan complained. "Why—?"

But Pitt wasn't listening. He was counting currency out on the rickety table.

"Five hundred and seventeen dollars," he announced presently.

"You—you ain't gonna give it away?" Dan asked fearfully.

"Not at all. But I'm going to invest five hundred of it," stated Pitt.

"But that won't do you no good," objected Dan. "You'll be leaving this burg tomorrow some time—if the law ain't got you first. So what—?"

"Perhaps," said Pitt, "we can give the investment away. Incidentally, while I'm out I'm going to send a telegram to a young chap named Douglas Chappin."

"Never heard of him—"

"Doug was the girl's sweetheart, and he's due back here tomorrow. He doesn't know she's going to be married tomorrow, and I don't think it would be fair to make the poor fellow go through the agony of watching Bessie marry this fellow North. So I'm going to wire him."

"Okay," grumbled Dan. "But that still ain't getting you any dough. And by the time you pay the hotel bill you won't have a dime left."

"That," agreed Pitt, "would be sad."

"Sad?" said Dan. "It'd be plain hell! Why, we'd be stuck—"

But Pitt was strolling out of the door. He was gone nearly two hours, and when he returned Dan was pacing the floor anxiously.

"I made the investment all right, Dan," Pitt said, almost gaily.

"Sure. But—"

"And I sent the telegram," Pitt went on.

"Yeah," said Dan. "Even that costs dough. But what—"

"I also called on Mr. Eli North," added Pitt.

Dan gaped at him. "You did what?"

"I called on Mr. North. He's looking forward to his marriage tomorrow with great eagerness. A very offensive person, Dan, and very foxy. However, he thanked me for calling."

"Thanked you?"

"Of course. You see, the situation isn't entirely on the level. I made it clear to him that I knew something about it. Then I pointed out that the way to keep himself out of trouble was to be open and above-board."

"Yeah? Well, I still don't get it."

"It's quite simple, Dan. I merely told Mr. North that in a case like this

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the way to transfer money or property to another person is in the presence of witnesses, and in such a way as to make it plain that any such payment was in exchange for legitimate services. He understood at once that I was making things quite safe for him."

A little hope crept into Dan's grin. "But he didn't give you some dough for the advice, huh?"

"Money?" Pitt said in a shocked tone. "I wouldn't think of accepting money from Eli North. I'd feel contaminated, Dan. Besides, it might not be quite legal."

"Wouldn't that be too bad!" grumbled Dan. "Anyhow, if you don't get it from him, how the hell are we gonna get outa here. He's the only one that's got any—"

"It's time to go to bed," Pitt evaded. "We must look our best for the wedding tomorrow."

III

AT eleven o'clock in the morning, the limousine was drawn up in front of Mr. Street's house. Dan was at the wheel, staring glumly at the house. Paul C. Pitt was inside, in the living room with Dr. Holly and Bessie Street.

The girl was dressed neatly, all ready for the wedding. Her face was drawn and pale, but her manner composed.

The doctor was as pallid as the girl, but not as calm, his face showing the discomfort of the alcoholic addict when deprived of his stimulant.

Pitt turned to the girl. "How is your father this morning?"

"I—I really don't know," she stammered. "He wouldn't let me in to see him. Dr. Holly saw him, though."

Pitt looked enquiringly at the doctor.

"I guess he'll be all right," mumbled Dr. Holly.

They waited, then, in silence. Presently they could hear a car coming to a stop. The door bell rang. With a sigh, the girl got up and went to the hall. She came back a minute later with a short, squat man, his dark little eyes afire with eagerness. His face wore an unaccustomed polish, and a large silk handkerchief dangled prominently from the pocket of his new frock coat.

"Good morning, Mr. North," Pitt said courteously.

North rubbed his hands together. His face was broken in an expansive grin. "Well, well!" he gurgled. He eyed the girl avidly. "All ready, my dear?"

"All ready," said the girl, in a very low voice.

"Fine! Fine! Well, pretty soon we'll go around to preacher Watson's and get it over with, eh? But first, to celebrate the occasion, we'll attend to a little business."

"Business?" said Bessie Street, flushing.

"That's right." With a flourish, Eli North flipped a slip of paper from his pocket. "Here, my dear, is your father's note for fifteen thousand dollars! A lot of money, my dear! But it don't mean anything to me," he added, leering at her, "when I'm getting you! See!"

Deliberately, he held the note in front of him, ripped it in two, flung the pieces in the air with a grandiloquent gesture.

"I—I'm sure," the girl murmured, "I'm very grateful, Eli."

"One thing more," went on Eli North. "As you know, I've had Dr.

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Holly take care of your father during his illness. He's done his best, and to show my appreciation I want to pay him—and pay him good!"

Again his hand went into his pocket and came out with a sheaf of currency. He riffled it with his fingers.

"Twenty-five hundred dollars!"

He handed it to Dr. Holly. The doctor, looking startled rather than surprised, too it.

"Very generous," murmured Pitt.

"Sure," said Eli North. "That's me! Well, now we can go around to the preacher's—"

"Not just yet," interposed Pitt, mildly.

NORTH glared at him. "What you mean, not yet? There's nothing to stop—"

"Oh, just a few little adjustments," Pitt said blandly. He turned to Dr. Holly, who, absent-mindedly, was still, holding the money in his hand. "I'll take the money, my good doctor!"

Without waiting for discussion, Pitt simply reached out and took the money. The doctor made no protest.

"You see, Mr. North," Pitt explained, as the money vanished into his own pocket, "Dr. Holly sold out to me last night. He sold me his equipment, his clientele—*and all bills due him.* So, of course, this money belongs to me!" Pitt smiled pleasantly. "Perhaps he didn't know that you were going to pay him in this open fashion!"

Eli North was sputtering. "But that—that was *your* idea!"

"What was my idea?" queried Pitt, serenely.

"Why, to pay it like it—it—" North glanced quickly at the girl and subsided.

Mr. North was staring out of the window. The girl seemed dazed.

"Okay," snapped North, recovering himself a little. "Okay, if that's the way is it. But now we can go on with the wedding—"

"I think," Pitt interrupted, "that Bessie should know a little more about it. I think she should know that's she's been deceived!"

North mumbled incoherently.

"I don't understand," Bessie said.

Pitt spoke very gently. "I'm sorry to have to disillusion such a loyal young lady. The truth is that your foster-father is not ill!"

"Not ill? But—"

"And he's in no danger of dying from shock. It was just one of Mr. North's little schemes to hurry you into marrying him. When I first called on Dr. Holly yesterday, I looked through his visiting bag. There I saw things that belong to the theatrical profession rather than to the medical.

"That excited my suspicions. Then when I came out to this house and found that your father insisted on his room remaining dark, I decided to make sure, which was why I asked for soap and water."

"It's unbelievable," Bessie gasped.

"I promptly told your father," Pitt went on, "that I would tell you at once that his pallor and his sunken eyes were faked—unless he gave me a letter to Dr. Holly. I took the letter to Dr. Holly and convinced him that it would be better for him to sell out to me than to have me make known his fraudulent activities to the State Medical Board. After that," concluded Pitt, smiling, "I had a little talk with Mr. North."

"But," sputtered Eli North, "you didn't say anything to me about buying out Holt here."

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"That," said Pitt, "would have spoiled the prescription."

Bessie Street became suddenly alive. "Then I don't have to get married!"

"Oh, but you do!" Pitt told her.

The girl's eyes were fixed on him, puzzled. The door of the living room was flung open suddenly. A young man was standing there. He was a pleasant-faced young man, and he didn't seem able to see anyone in the room except the girl.

"Doug!" cried the girl.

"Bess!" cried the young man.

They were in each other's arms.

"I got your telegram, darling," he said. "But I'm afraid—

"Telegram?" said the girl. "I sent no telegram!"

"Don't joke with me. It told me to hurry home and marry you—today! I got the license, as instructed, but I—I'm afraid I can't do it, Bess!"

The girl was looking over his shoulder at Pitt. Pitt's face was unrevealing, but she smiled at him.

"Why can't you marry me now, Doug?" she said.

"Why, I have nothing! I've got to get an office and build up a practice. To do that, I'll have to make money first. I couldn't have you sacrifice—"

"That," Pitt put in, "has been taken care of, Doug, my boy. You see, Dr. Holly here has decided to leave town." Pitt had a legal-looking document in his hand. He scratched his signature on the bottom of it with his fountain pen. "Dr. Holt's equipment and practice are hereby assigned to you!"

"But I—I don't even know you, sir!" protested the young man.

"You can just remember me as Dr. Pitt," said Pitt. "Dr. Pitt, of New York."

"*Remember* you?"

Pitt shrugged. "I can't stay here. I won't be seeing you again. And it's pleasant to be remembered—by some people. My man is waiting for me very impatiently right now. I'd suggest that you tell Mr. Eli North the way to go home, then go around and see preacher Watson." He shook the young man's hand. "Goodbye, and good luck!"

He strode out to the hall and had reached the front door when the girl's voice halted him. "Wait, please!"

She was running after him, caught up with him, flung her arms about his neck and kissed him.

Pitt regarded her solemnly. "I shall remember that kiss," he said, "as long as I live." And then he strode down the walk toward the limousine. . . .

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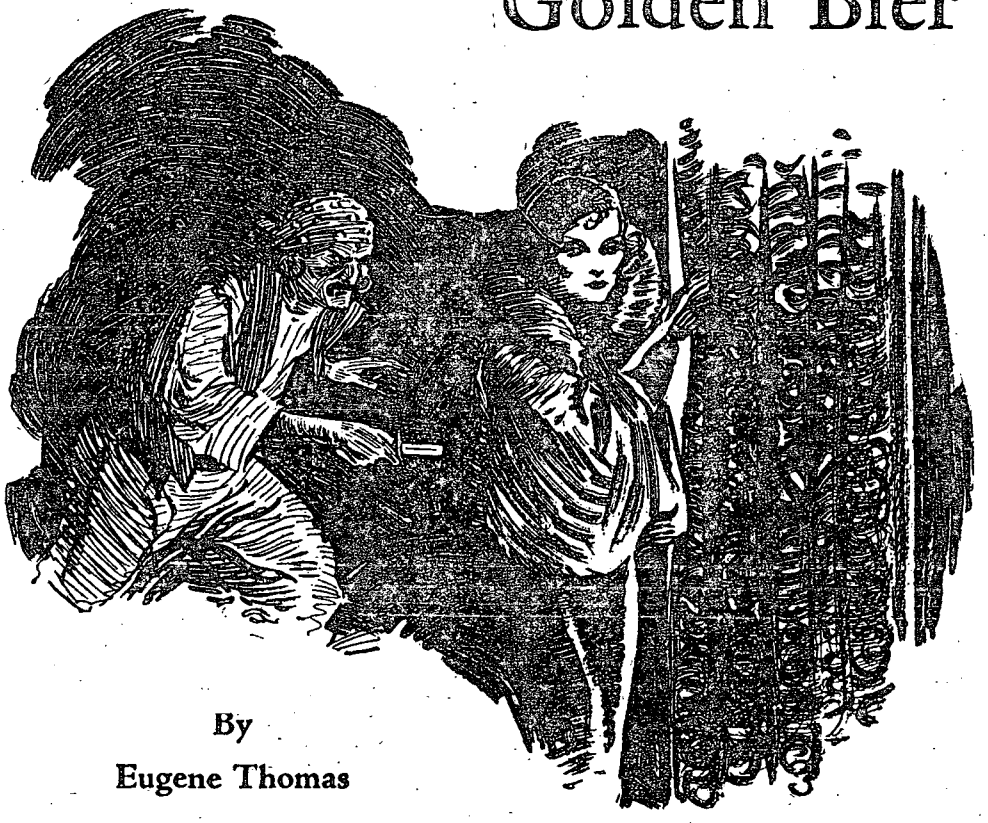
The Cross Killer and the Golden Bier



At that instant, there was the merest shadow of a movement in back of Vivian Legrand

By

Eugene Thomas

For the Vanquished, Death —for the Victor, a Coffin —When Vivian Legrand Matches Wits with the Most Murderous Man in the Wide Reaches of Spain

DFW SHORT NOVELETTE

CHAPTER I

Treasure Chest

GENERAL Count Morales, head of the Spanish police, had come in person to the village of Zucorra because of the near insurrection afflicting that community. Tomás Delgado, lawless parent of the celebrated bandit, Cruz Delgado, with his partisans had stood the siege of their neighbors; but then these Zucorran belligerents had joined forces to beat off the interfering attack of soldiers and po-

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lice. Lives had been lost, many more had been wounded. Thus far only Vivian Legrand, known as the Lady from Hell and the most unusual tourist to visit Spain in a century, stood to gain anything from the bloody encounter. But nobody knew about that.

Hidden in a sub-cellar of the home of Tomás Delgado was the loot of his bandit son, Cruz. Having disposed of Cruz Delgado, after saving themselves from his treacherous, desperate plot, Vivian and Adrian Wylie, her accomplished confederate, had deciphered a small drawing found in the hollow handle of the notorious desperado's knife. The cipher marks of that drawing had acquainted Wylie with the true location of the surplus riches Cruz had stolen and had not squandered.

With this knowledge Vivian had made her furtive and hazardous journey to Zucorra, to the very house occupied by Cruz Delgado's parents—the cruel, vindictive father, the sullen, tormented mother. And her journey had resulted in the all-day conflict Spain already knew as the "battle of Zucorra." But Vivian, not even to be distracted by a small local war, had contrived to make use of the mother of Cruz in locating the hiding-place of the dead bandit leader's hoard. Now, she knew where the treasure was, but removing it from Zucorra and then from Spain was another matter. . . .

Adrian Wylie, that loyal and talented lieutenant, had hastened to beleaguered Zucorra with the detachment of mounted police under Rafael de Vargas. And almost the first words Vivian had whispered to her partner when the fighting ended, and she had been rescued uninjured, informed him of the secret success of her foolhardy plot.

"Right here in the depths of this house, Doc," she said. "A chest full of coins and currency. Some jewels, too, I think—didn't have too much time to get up an inventory." She smiled. Vivian could smile even when surrounded by the dead and the dying. The shouts of the conquering Civil Guard the cursing of prisoners, the groans of the wounded undergoing the crudest first-aid — these conditions passed unnoticed by the Lady from Hell.

Hadn't she concentrated on restoring their fortunes, ravaged so peculiarly on the flight from Monteverde in South America? And wasn't she now close upon the track of real wealth once more?

"Right here, eh?" said Wylie with a wry grin. "Nothing to do but borrow an infantry regiment from King Alfonso, to help us cart it out of his kingdom."

"I'll think of a way," Vivian declared. "In fact, I have already. . . ."

She already had confided to the smitten officer, de Vargas, her fondness for picturesque Zucorra. "I honestly adore this fine old house. It must date from the seventeenth century. I'm going to buy it from the estate of Tomás Delgado. I promised his wife, who, poor woman, died in my arms during the fighting, that I would preserve this, her home, just as it had been in her lifetime."

Rafael de Vargas, who had won promotion when Vivian's bullet had finished Cruz Delgado, considered her too lovely a person to be denied any whim. But the veteran soldier, Morales, who was also proud to be numbered among the Legrand admirers, "the most exclusive club in Madrid today," had courage and authority enough to put his foot down.

"It is out of the question, *Señora* Legrand," said the commander of

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Spain's police. "I speak both for myself and for the Government. You cannot buy this house or any house near Zucorra. You cannot rent here, or remain here."

Vivian could not suspect this graying and distinguished man. He knew nothing of Cruz Delgado's hidden fortune. If she coaxed hard enough, he would allow her to remain at least a fortnight, a week, three days. . . .

Morales proved obdurate. "I am not only indebted to you, *señora,* for being so lovely and making the world a pleasanter prospect—yes, even to an old soldier's eyes. We are all indebted to you as well for your unbelievable rashness, which has resulted now on two occasions in disposing of some of the worst element of Spain."

"Then, surely, dear General—"

"None of that, young lady. You simply can't remain in Zucorra when de Vargas and his men withdraw. We have all of Spain to police, remember—and these are turbulent times. Forty-eight hours after the last gendarme leaves this vicinity, the bandits and would-be rascals—old, middle-aged and novices—will begin drifting back into Zucorra.

"It would not be safe for you. We can't leave a garrison in a place of this size, you know. We can't fortify cow-sheds and pig-sties. And nothing less than a strong, heavily armed force—such as lately converged on the 'siege' old Tomás Delgado had provoked, and which cost him his life—can continuously enforce the law in Zucorra.

"Oh, I see what you are thinking!" he exclaimed. "You smile. You think I am Morales, head of the police, and I should be ashamed to admit that I and my department can't keep order anywhere. But this is Spain, *señora*—and Spain means tradition. If honest men emigrated to this village, they would soon be infected with violence and stealth, and turn to outlawry. Tradition! Why, even you—should I permit you to reside here—"

"Count Morales!" Vivian's laugh was musical and merry; but in her objection there was the least shade of reproof and injured feelings.

The elderly grandee, a favorite at Court, bowed low over her exquisite ivory hand. "Forgive me, dear *señora,*" he begged. "I was, of course, joking. You are all that is gracious and good."

"Then why shouldn't I try to *reform* Zucorra?"

"With Maxim guns, possibly—not otherwise. You must believe me, for I know. Take the advice of a man old enough to be your grand—ah, your father, *señora.* This part of the province of Leon is not for such as you. I forbid you to try to stay here. I respectfully urge you prepare to return to Madrid at once."

Vivian Legrand met this unaccustomed setback with a captivating shrug of resignation. Gaiety by degrees slipped from her, and she was serious and then becomingly sad.

"Poor, poor *Señora* Delgado," she lamented. "I did so want to stay here, if only to keep the vow I made to the dying woman."

"Any priest—any church in Christendom would absolve you from such a vow," put in handsome young Rafael de Vargas, eager to impress Vivian and also his formidable superior, Count Morales.

With a heavenward glance, the Lady from Hell capitulated. "I dare say you both know best. But at any rate, I can keep my other vow."

"And what, pray, is that?" Morales queried a trifle uneasily.

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"To give *Señora* Delgado a splendid funeral, returning her body to the city of her birth."

"But I had supposed she also was a native of this region of traditional outlaws."

Vivian's eyes were thoughtful. They wanted to get away from Spain with the Cruz Delgado money. In which direction would it be wisest to move? Southwest, toward Portugal? Back to Madrid, where her fashionable friends and admirers were an uncomfortable legion? Or north toward France?

In an instant—since she had no opportunity to consult her partner, Wylie—she had made her decision. "With almost her dying breath the poor woman—hers had been an unhappy life—told me she had come as a girl from Santander, and asked if I would promise to see to it that she was there laid to rest, in consecrated ground."

"But, of course—without doubt—a permit can be arranged."

Thinking fast, Vivian clinched her argument. "One sees all things very clearly, I suppose, when at the point of death. *Señora* Delgado knew that her son, Cruz, many times a murderer, had been denied burial in consecrated ground. She doubtless suspected that her evil husband would also be—and so she turned to me, a stranger. . . ."

The Spanish officers, old and young, were deeply moved that so entrancing a woman, and one so recently in gravest peril, should devote her first thoughts, her first activities, to the spiritual concerns of another in no degree related to her, by blood, class, nationality, or any obligation.

"I'll give orders at once," said Count Morales. "De Vargas, find the village priest—if he's been left alive by some of the visiting scoundrels. The funeral and burial in Santander shall be as you wish—at the expense of the State."

"At my expense," said Vivian. "Surely, General, you will allow me that privilege."

Presently Vivian and Wylie had a few minutes uninterruptedly alone. And the latter voiced some of his ironical doubts about this latest Legrand affair for subsidizing religious services.

"Just how much cash do you figure we can spend even on the *madre* of Cruz Delgado?"

"Say one per cent, Doc, of what we're taking away from this house."

"But how—how?" Wylie demanded anxiously. "Morales has put his foot down hard on your scheme of lingering after the police and soldiers withdraw. And you know how energetic Spanish troops and police are said to be when it comes to looting the neighbors. By now, probably, all of Cruz Delgado's *pesetas* are well on their way out of Zucorra, with old Morales even taking his captain-general's cut."

"Nonsense. If the thieves of this village could never locate the treasure, nobody else will be able to, Doc. I tell you Cruz's own mother didn't suspect where he had hid his spare cash till I let her see your interpretation of the cipher on the drawing. Then she led me to the right compartment of the musty old sub-cellar, and together we discovered the chest, whose contents I'd promised to divide with her.

"As the fighting grew hotter, I left the treasure right where it had been hidden. And now when it comes time for my *siesta,* and for a while even Morales won't be expecting to compliment me and hold my hand, you and I can sneak down there and arrange for the getaway."

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AS it turned out, the mother of the late and widely unlamented Cruz Delgado received not only a fine funeral—she received a military funeral. And when Vivian assured Count Morales that she had counted on no such pomp and circumstance, he explained in a hushed tone:

"Such precautions are necessary, *Señora* Legrand—as much to protect you, the living, as that poor creature who is dead and already blessed in finding you for her benefactress and champion."

Vivian's green eyes glowed, but were immediately veiled by her long lashes. "You expect more fighting, then? Your police lead a hard life here in Spain, General."

"Indeed, yes. And why not," he said with some warmth, "when we get the sweepings, the scum and worst fugitives of other nations dumped upon us. I intend to prevent fighting, *señora,* by this excessive display of force. And the reason is," he added in a virtual whisper, "a police spy has warned us that Luis Moraga and some of his cutthroats have been seen hovering in this vicinity. They'd raid a funeral procession, a wedding, anything."

"Another bandit?" Vivian asked with well concealed interest. As though she never before had heard of Luis Moraga—though actually she had heard more perhaps than the head of the Spanish police himself. The Count would have been shocked, indeed, to learn that this beauteous lady on whom he showered his debonair, Old World attentions even knew the terrible Moraga by sight.

"Worse than a bandit," Morales was proceeding to explain. "He is wanted in France, and there is a reward of sixty thousand francs posted for him there, dead or alive. This man is known to us as the Cross Killer. The French have a zest for dramatic titles. But in Moraga's case it seems to be wholly deserved.

"Several persons, both men and women, whom he is suspected of slaying on his way up from petty crime, were not only stabbed or hacked to death, but a cross—two deep gashes made at right angles—was cut upon the face of each by the killer as his special, savage brand."

Vivian Legrand shuddered bewitchingly and opened her eyes wide, as the elderly beau had expected her to do. "I sincerely hope we see nothing of this Moraga," she murmured. "And thank you very much, General, for the strong escort."

The Lady from Hell, however, was destined to see Luis Moraga, the so-called Cross Killer, not once but several times. And the first of these unexpected occasions came before the costly and impressive cortège, honoring the mother of Cruz Delgado, even took the winding mountain road leading to its coastal destination.

Vivian—whose eyes were so miraculously keen—spotted a tall, seedy looking loiterer in the crowd of curious and apparently harmless peasants thronging to watch the funeral procession assemble in Zucorra's single street. As soon as she could, inconspicuously, she directed her partner's attention to the man.

"Well, what about him?" Wylie queried. "Some stray Delgado you also want to take pity on?"

"Perhaps you remember a certain Basque we once knew in Paris—by name, Luis Moraga?"

"Luis—Moraga—" Suddenly her partner was electrified. "Good Lord, Vi—I'll say I do. The Cross Killer, you mean—"

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"But formerly just a petty thief and hanger-on, who did a few minor jobs for us in the old days."

"And what reminds you of him, for heaven's sake?"

"That tall fellow down there near the hearse which holds not only Cruz Delgado's poor mother, but Cruz Delgado's rich treasure. That tall fellow, Doc, *is* Moraga!"

Now Adrian Wylie might have scoffed at her offhand identification, or flattered himself by exhibiting a hearty masculine skepticism. However, he knew Vivian's intuitions and keenness only too well, had labored with her too long in the vineyards of uppercrust extortion, crime and fraud, even to ignore any hunch she might be playing.

"I hardly can recall anything about Moraga," he admitted. "Maybe it's he, Vi—though how on earth you managed to recognize him like that and instantly place his name beats me."

"Count Morales himself told me a spy had reported Luis Moraga lurking in this vicinity. A fugitive from France, of course, and worth, hoofs and hide, a cool sixty thousand francs —at any French frontier post."

"Let the Spaniards try to collect that," Wylie cautioned. "We've got more than twelve times as much *already in cash* to carry over the French frontier."

During the *siesta* hour, while all Zucorra, troops, police and populace relaxed and slumbered, he and Vivian had descended into the depths of the house which belonged to the late Tomás Delgado. Examining the contents of Cruz's treasure chest had not only excited the pair, who were accustomed to wealth and of late had been desperately conscious of their lack of it, but also gave Wylie the idea of how to implant the treasure in *Señora* Delgado's funeral cortège.

True to his surmise, the locality had proved ill-provided with undertaker's supplies. The best coffin available, brought from Ponferrada, the nearest town, was an altogether cheap affair. Vivian, as the beneficent purchaser, insisted it was not nearly good enough. But more than a day would be lost in telegraphing to Burgos or Valladolid for a more costly substitute. Whereupon Adrian Wylie—encouraged by Morales and de Vargas, who wished to humor Vivian but resisted any prospect of delay—volunteered to "make over" the cheap article from Ponferrada's humble undertaker, so that it would do credit to the sort of funeral arrangements Vivian desired to confer on the mother of Cruz Delgado, who, as she described events in Zucorra, had saved her life.

The process of making over the cheap pine coffin was more a job of decoration than of carpentry. Wylie declined with thanks local offers of assistance. He—under Vivian Legrand's direction—padded and relined the coffin with a rich fabric. There was plenty of costly material to be furtively bargained for in the neighborhood of Zucorra. Generations of thieves, of receivers of stolen goods, had hidden away and had cherished bolts of velvet and brocade as superb as anything brought from the East by the olden-time caravans and argosies of the days of Ferdinand and Isabella.

Señora Delgado in death was to enjoy a splendor utterly unknown to her cramped and unrelenting life. The coffin was artfully encased in black velvet of a texture once reserved for royalty and their robes of state. The cushion-like interior was not precisely soft, but the poor *señora* was, after all, past all

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earthly discomforts. In it Wylie had hidden the money hoarded by her son —as though finally the evil-doing Cruz Delgado had elected to share it with her and respect the maternal relationship. Not only was the funeral cortège impressive, therefore, but the pitiful body of the woman whom Vivian really honored as a partisan and friend lay virtually upon a golden bier.

Since the man she kept telling herself was the badly wanted Luis Moraga still was loitering about, Vivian again consulted her partner.

"Do you suppose he has spies in Zucorra, Doc?"

"Very likely. He's the Cross Killer —and so it'd pay him to protect his hide by knowing what goes on."

"Then he alone may have a tip about Cruz Delgado's treasure!" Vivian exclaimed.

"What can he do? Your charms have lined us up a small army to proceed to Santander by way of La Robla, Cervera and Reinosa. No bandit force would dare attack us."

"Suppose he's recognized us as I recognized him? Some of these Civil Guards—and most of the local police —are crooked as they come, Doc. Moraga has connections with them, you can bet, or he'd have been taken and returned to France long ago. If he tips off his friends in the police they'll make it hot for us, demand the lion's share of the treasure."

Wylie remained immune to this alarm. He had done an exquisite job on the coffin, and, craftsman at heart, he was proud and at peace with the world. "Vi, you've let Spain get hold of you. Most of these people are dumb as beetles, Luis Moraga included. You have more wits behind those beautiful eyes of yours, my dear, than all the Civil Guard combined."

"Just the same, I'm going to sick Colonel de Vargas on Luis Moraga."

"As you please. But don't assume Moraga has both learned about the peculiarly secret treasure and also identified us, whom he hasn't laid eyes on for years, and who must in the meantime have changed."

Vivian nonetheless proceeded against Moraga with an excess of vindictive stealth. In him she sensed a formidable adversary. To both de Vargas and Count Morales, her devoted admirers, she spoke of a loitering peasant who jeered at the funeral arrangements and amused the least reverent of the local onlookers with obscene comments and derisive pantomime. And she described the tall fellow who was, she now felt convinced, the wanted Cross Killer.

Thus it turned out that, only a few moments before the cortège was about to set forth forever from Zucorra, a sudden, sharp outcry was heard, and signs of violent commotion agitating the crowd. Two members of de Vargas' mounted force had stepped in close to the agitator Vivian had subtly denounced and abruptly sought to pinion his arms.

But Luis Moraga was not taken. With the swift and desperate energy of the fugitive he had shaken off both his captors. A long knife leaped from his coarse jacket to his bony, murderous hand. One of the arresting officers was fatally stabbed in the chest. The other foolishly tried to grapple with Moraga, instead of using his revolver and firing while he had the chance.

Surging curious spectators closed in around the wounded policeman, and the pair who were struggling for the knife, with grim and silent intensity. The press of people seemed to separate the officer from his prey. And his arm was badly gashed, the right arm—pre-

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venting him from belatedly making use of his revolver. When other police came to his relief the tall, shabby fellow seen near the golden bier was no longer to be found in Zucorra.

Two days later the funeral party arrived with due solemnity in Santander. Vivian paid to have the coffin removed to a vault, pending her making arrangements for proper burial and the last rites of the Church.

"Well, we've got the money smuggled along this far, thanks to your ruse," said Wylie. "What's next?"

"Somebody is going to tell me that the cheaper coffin, good as you have made it look, is not suited to the climate of this coast. Then, to keep my promise made to *Señora* Delgado, I'll buy her a fine metallic one. We can afford that, Doc, out of the thirty thousand *pesetas* we've already subtracted from Cruz's cash reserve. I'll say to the local undertaker that I'm sentimental about keeping the velvets and brocade you made use of—old family treasures, and all that! And when you secretly dismantle the first or Zucorran coffin, the treasure becomes ours to carry off to France."

CHAPTER II

A Knife from Behind

FROM the balcony of a hotel in Santander that evening, Vivian Legrand gazed out over the dancing lights of the harbor with a feeling of welcome relief. She and Wylie had come through many dangers since landing in the south, at Cadiz. Yet hadn't they found wealth? The treasure craftily brought from Zucorra was really secure in a guarded vault. She herself—again using the excuse of sacred vows and sentiment—had hired the guards. But in a day or two she and her partner would attend the last rites for poor *Señora* Tomás Delgado, and then, bountifully enriched, they would proceed in safety on their journey into France.

Suddenly, warned by that inner sense that told her so unerringly of the imminence of danger, Vivian swung from the balcony post, against which she had been leaning. And just in time to save her life!

There was a flash of silver in the air before her eyes, and a thrown knife thudded into the post. It stood there, quivering.

Swift as a tigress, Vivian Legrand whirled, and the deadly little revolver that she was never without leaped into her hand. The balcony was deserted. There was only one place from which the knife could have come, the doorway to the corridor. With running strides she covered the distance, and saw, fleeing before her, the slim silhouette of a woman.

The greenish eyes of the Lady from Hell narrowed in thought as she watched the slender back of the woman disappear around a turn in the hallway. That corridor was a blind alley, she knew. And so the woman must have a room somewhere around that turn.

The woman's face had been hidden from view by a black mantilla, but Vivian had seen that she was quite small and wore red shoes. Vivian was positive she had never seen her before.

Her face was grim as she turned back to the balcony. Had she waited a fraction of a second longer to move from that railing, she'd not be alive at this moment. She'd be crumpled on the floor with a knife in her back. Her intuition had been right again, as usual. She had been so sure that their secret was safe, and now this. . . .

Swiftly the Lady from Hell walked

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over to the post where the knife still quivered and wrenched it out, her green eyes blazing with sudden fire. There was a yellow-brown stain on the blade, extending an inch or more up from the point. *Poison!*

Something that resembled the cold malignancy of a snake's gaze coiled in the depths of those alert, greenish eyes and rendered them stony, glassy, shallow. Whoever the woman was that had thrown the knife, she was taking no chances on her victim escaping alive. The merest scratch from it would have caused her death.

Vivian examined the blade carefully as she walked down the corridor to the room occupied by Adrian Wylie, her companion in crime. The knife was of Spanish manufacture. By balancing it in her hand she knew that it had been made expressly for throwing. She nodded—the picture was now taking form in her mind.

Wylie looked up from the desk where he was working as she entered. Swiftly she outlined to him what had happened.

"I don't know," she said thoughtfully, "who is responsible." Not once did it occur to her that it might be an agent of the police. She knew better. The Lady from Hell preyed on criminals. The vast fortune that Adrian Wylie and herself had amassed—and lost—had been gained at the expense of the underworld. "I do not think there can be any doubt of the reason," she continued. "Someone is wise to the fact that we have the Delgado loot . . . and that someone means to put us out of the way and take it."

Wylie nodded, running one hand through his gray hair.

"But why attempt to kill you? It seems foolish. If they know that we have the treasure, they certainly know that we are not sufficient fools to leave it lying around where any chance comer might put his hand upon it. If we were killed, there is every chance that the hiding-place of the money might die with us."

"I have thought of that, too," Vivian confessed. "It is either a very stupid, childish move—or a move that has behind it a purpose that we have not begun to fathom."

"Whoever it is, isn't taking a shot in the dark," Wylie said. "They know we've got the stuff."

"Yes," Vivian said slowly. "They know . . . but we don't know who they are. And until we do . . . we're liable to be shot, stabbed or poisoned when we least expect it." She got up from the chair into which she had dropped and paced up and down the floor with catlike tread. To be on the defensive was not a usual state for the Lady from Hell. One of her cardinal principles was to strike first . . . and strike hardest.

Her next words showed that this was the strategy she had in mind. "We've got to find whoever it is and convince them that it would be healthier to leave us alone."

"Santander is a large port," Wylie reminded her drily.

Vivian agreed. "I know. But not too large to find the place you seek, if you have a guide."

"A guide?" Wylie stared at her in astonishment.

She nodded again. "Whoever it is, isn't playing a lone hand. And they, whether two, or three, or four, must meet somewhere. It may be in a hotel room, a park, or a restaurant. The chances are they'll meet tonight after the attempted murder—to concoct a new plan. And if they do, I mean to be there."

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"And," Wylie said with a shake of his head, "I suppose you intend to utilize a crystal ball or a fortune teller to find out just where these people are to meet?"

"No, common sense," said Vivian. "The woman who tried to kill me has a room around the bend of the central corridor. She was tiny and she wore red shoes. There are probably not a great many women answering that description along that particular stretch of corridor.

"You have unusual skill with stubborn doors, Adrian. By a process of elimination we can boil down whatever suspects we may have to the woman in whose room we find a pair of small, red shoes. Every time she leaves the hotel we'll follow her until she meets her confederates. And then"—there was a hardness in her ordinarily musical voice—"there will be fireworks."

VIVIAN was fully aware of the fact that she walked straight into the heart of danger.

The street into which the woman she was trailing had turned was a canyon of sinister shadows. The green eyes of the Lady from Hell darted from left to right, her ears attuned to the sound of the stealthiest movement. At any moment, she realized, a revolver shot might shatter the stillness of the Spanish night, or a knife come hurtling from the shadows to sink between her shoulder blades. She had not the slightest inkling of the identity of the people she was fighting, save for the woman that she trailed; while they, on the other hand, might be, and probably were, fully aware of her identity.

The woman ahead turned into a black little street, opened a door where light gleamed through the painted green glass. Vivian's eyes narrowed. Had her suspicions that the Spanish underworld was attempting to muscle in on the treasure she and Wylie had acquired in Zucorra needed confirmation, the café that the girl had just entered would have confirmed those suspicions. The Posada Tres Hermanos was not the sort of place recommended to even the most inquisitive visitor to Santander. Many of its habitués were smugglers, and a fair percentage of cutthroats could be found at its tables any night.

The Lady from Hell slowed her pace, halted for a moment to permit the slouching figure that had been moving from one pool of darkness to another to catch up. It was Wylie, following Vivian as a reserve force in the event of trouble. His ears barely caught the whispered phrase from the woman as she stood in the fringe of a shadow.

"Doc, she's in there," Vivian whispered. "I'm going in."

Wylie did not pause in his stride. But Vivian knew that he would remain outside there, ready to render aid if needed.

She shot a glance through the grimy little window. The woman she followed was nowhere in sight. Vivian opened the door and went in.

No one apparently paid any attention to the lovely woman with the aureole of flaming red hair. But she was instantly aware of eyes beneath lowered lids that took in her plain black gown—her rich fur cape. Eyes that summed up and appraised. A chain of eyes surrounded her. And she was warned of the hands that went with those eyes,

However, the deadly little automatic she carried hidden away should be more than a match for the knives of any of these men. And the hint of latent cruelty that lay in the depths of those greenish eyes might have warned

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a close observer that the woman herself could be as dangerous as the weapon she carried. Not for nothing was she called The Lady from Hell!

A tall, slender man with up-curled mustaches came with swift, gliding feet to make her welcome.

She asked for a private room.

The man's hands went up in a gesture of disappointment. There was only one private room and that had been engaged. But he would give her a table in a corner where she would be secluded. He pointed to a table in a little alcove next to the outer door.

Vivian shook her head, and indicated a table at the far end of the long room—a table only a few feet from the only other door, save that of the kitchen, through which the girl could have gone. Undoubtedly the door of the private room where even now members of the Spanish underworld might be planning to rob her and Wylie of the Delgado hoard.

The man seated her there. For nearly fifteen minutes she sat, giving no sign that she was other than a woman there on a rendezvous. Not for an instant did she seem the cool, calculating woman that Wylie knew, not once the deadly adventuress that she actually was.

Suddenly Vivian's hand tightened upon the stem of her wine glass, slightly spilling the golden Manzanilla she had felt compelled to order. With a startled intensity she recognized the man who had just entered. Luis Moraga! So he had come to Santander from the mountains near Zucorra!

He entered the establishment with the swaggering assurance of one very familiar in such company. The greeting of the proprietor gave evidence that Moraga was very well known. Yet only a single word was spoken by Moraga. The proprietor spoke briefly in reply.

Moraga was now making straight for the door near which sat the Lady from Hell. It was a tense moment. She had turned in such a way that she felt sure the newcomer would not see her face. She was badly cornered, indeed, if he should chance to recognize her. For to Vivian the small, crooked pieces of the picture puzzle were dropping into place. She understood now who her chief enemy was, and how the Cruz Delgado treasure which she had begun to think so safe was threatened by forces both of cunning and ferocity.

While she felt her neck and shoulders tingle, Luis Moraga passed close to her. His glance swept the back of her head with arrogant indifference. Some woman who waited for her sweetheart meant nothing to the terrible Cross Killer with a golden treasure flaming in his mind. And so without recognition Moraga swept past Vivian, opened the door and went in.

For a moment or two she sat there quietly, until the proprietor passed from the room into the kitchen at the rear. Then, with a swift movement, Vivian was on her feet. Noiselessly she opened the door and slipped through.

She found herself in a narrow corridor which ended in a curtain-masked doorway at the far end. Light filtered around the edges, and from behind came voices.

She crept to the curtain and peered through. Seated about the table was the woman she had been following, Moraga and two others.

For the first time Vivian had a close look at the woman who had tried to kill her. The glow from the single overhead light revealed her coils of glisten-

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ing black hair, the dark eyes, olive skin and white teeth of the typical Spaniard.

"You are late, Luis," she was saying to Moraga as Vivian peered intently through the curtain.

"And what of that?" he snapped. "I could get here no sooner. And I see it in your eyes—you have failed."

Carlotta's shrug was meant to match his insolence. "That woman has the luck of the devil, Luis—"

"I warned you that she is often called the Lady from Hell. What happened?"

"The dagger and the poison, as you ordered, Luis. But she threw herself aside by instinct—I swear it. I hadn't made one little sound, there on the hotel balcony. And so"—another graceful shrug—"she made me miss."

"Better than you, *querida,* have tried to beat her and have failed. But I—I shall not fail," Moraga boasted, stimulated by the girl's dark eyes and admiring glance. "I'm afraid that my affection for you blinded me to the faults of your plan. The Legrand woman is the guiding spirit, and it seemed sensible to believe that, with her completely out of the way, it would be an easy thing to learn the exact hiding place of the Delgado treasure from her companion.

"Somehow I find myself glad now that you failed. The Legrand woman may not be the only one who knows just where the treasure lies hidden. And so," he pursued, "I've got a better plan. Keep them here in Santander. Stop every means of exit—ships, motor roads, trains. Let it gradually dawn on them how dangerously we—the unknown—threaten their very lives. Then get them to agree to bargain—and, of course, Luis Moraga's terms will be *all* the treasure in return for sparing their foolhardy lives.

"It turns out well, then, *querida,* that your knife went wide. That will worry and frighten them with an unknown enemy. A few more strokes of this kind, and Santander will seem too hot to hold them. But then the play is ours. They will learn, in threatening, secret ways, that there is no escape."

One of the other men in the room leaned forward, a puzzled expression lining his swarthy, evil countenance. "Suppose, Luis, they go in disguise. You told us yourself when you came from Zucorra how you know this man, Adrian Wylie, and that he is noted in the underworld for his devilishly clever disguises. We can't halt automobiles, search ships and go through departing trains, examining the passengers as though we are police."

Luis Moraga's laugh was like the public bragging of a dictator. "I have thought of everything, I promise you," said he. "Thanks to the Syndicalist and Anarchist troubles in Catalonia and elsewhere, everybody, native or alien, who travels in Spain must carry a police identity card.

"My spies have seen Wylie and the Legrand woman showing their cards. She's so thick with doddering old Morales, she has a kind of special pass. It is pink, an unmistakable thing. And no matter how disguised, since they are not any longer afraid of the police because they have all kinds of pull in Madrid, they will not bother to change their identity cards. Do you see?

"My men henceforth will cover every barrier. They can't leave Santander without showing the pink cards. And my fellows will be on watch, not for the pair the way they look today, but for any man and woman showing Morales' special permission to travel."

Luis Moraga paused in an elaborate ceremonial, lighting himself a cigarette.

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"And that is my plan. What have you to say—any improvements?"

"No, none. It is the best plan. But suppose right now word came from a spy, Luis, that the pink identity card had been seen. Suppose Wylie and this Lady from Hell, as you say, were going to leave aboard ship. What could we do soon enough to help us get at the hidden treasure?"

"It is a fair question, Pedro," the leader reflected. "And here's the answer. I happen to know that not even a coasting steamer is due to sail for the next two days, a fortunate circumstance proving that luck is with us. But if they should be going aboard a ship, and were taking much luggage, then I would guess that they have the treasure with them. I have had a warrant forged, accusing them of robbing the home of the late Tomás Delgado. I have a police sergeant well paid, and he would go aboard with the warrant . . . but merely instruct them to return to their hotel. That lets him out—the warrant may not be in order, you see—and that is enough, since it is merely necessary that they *remain* within call in Santander."

"And if they do not take much luggage, Luis?" queried Carlotta.

"We judge then, *querida*, that they know where the treasure still is hidden and are going after it. And spies quietly go along with them, the rest of us following."

"But not even into France!" she exclaimed.

Moraga flashed her a dark and burning glance. "Hardly into France," said the Cross Killer. "But Cruz Delgado never buried any of his loot in France. He did not take it when he fled that time to South America. No—it is here in Spain, and my feeling is—right here in Santander. The wife of Tomás Delgado, I have learned, was born near Zucorra—at Villafranca. Why, then, did the Lady from Hell decide to make this seaport the old woman's 'native place'? Because there is some big profit in it—and also she is scheming to get away from Spain.

"I, remember," he boasted, "was once her partner. Before—before she worked with this con man, Wylie. I know her. I know how hard it is to get the best of her. In fact, except for the plan I have made—I doubt if we should ever lay hands on the loot of Cruz Delgado."

CHAPTER III

Trapped!

BACK in the hallway the green eyes of Vivian Legrand were smouldering in the darkness. Moraga's *was* a good plan, none could decide that better than herself. She and Wylie had congratulated themselves on their close acquaintance with Count Morales, which had earned them the special police permits, and which they were already planning to have stamped, preparatory to their leaving Spain for a foreign destination.

Vivian's attention snapped back to Luis Moraga as the door on the opposite side of the room swung open. The proprietor of the Posada entered quietly. Vivian watched alertly as he made his way to the side of the Cross Killer, bent and whispered something with hardly disguised eagerness.

Somewhere inside of her that little warning bell of intuition rang one of its more urgent alarms!

"Have him brought in here," Luis Moraga said loudly. "I prefer to talk with him in here. . . ."

The proprietor nodded, smirking, and withdrew. Moraga turned to his

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companions, but waited, in seeming thought, before he said:

"What I have just heard changes our plan somewhat."

Carlotta sprang impatiently to her feet. "The Legrand woman's leaving?"

"Wait—be still. Something has come our way to make things much, much easier," Moraga sneered.

Just at that instant there was the merest shadow of a movement in back of Vivian. Her nerves went molten with tenseness. But before she could make the least move the blade of a stiletto pierced through her dress and pricked the flesh of her back.

She made no sound. She could feel the needle-sharp point dig in. It was icy cold and then warm and moist, and she knew that she was bleeding, though the thrust was as delicate as expert surgery.

The shock of being discovered had taken her breath away. She was in a trap, and a desperate one! The message brought in by the proprietor had warned Luis Moraga of her lurking close by in the passage.

The tip of the blade was pressing into her back, urging her forward. And to wheel or try to resist meant instant death. Forward she went, reluctantly, a step at a time. And the knife kept pace, its lightly painful pressure never increasing, never relaxing.

Then, with a sudden, characteristic gesture of defiance Vivian swept the curtains aside and entered the room. Close to where Luis Moraga was sitting she halted, her narrowed eyes turning from his exultant face to Carlotta's and then to the others seated there.

She met all their wondering stares steadily and calmly. She had five to deal with now, counting the unseen adversary, who stayed directly behind her, holding the dominant stiletto at her back. However, there were six cartridges in the automatic she carried concealed in the folds of her ample skirt. . . .

"*Señora* Legrand, you cannot imagine what pleasure your visit gives me," said the leader with affected courtliness. "It's so kind of you to try to save us needless trouble and labor—and bloodshed."

Some glittering spark in Vivian's eyes seemed abruptly to remind him that, though she was trapped and hopelessly outnumbered, she did not appear to be really afraid.

"Here, hold her fast," he commanded, springing to his feet. The stiletto point did not swerve; but the two other men crossed the room at once and seized Vivian by her arms. Carlotta also moved near, awaiting orders.

Moraga nodded. "Search her, *querida*. She's bound to be armed." And Carlotta, grinning her malice, made a quick and yet humiliatingly thorough job of the searching.

"Ah, Luis—see here!" she cried, producing Vivian's favorite automatic. That small, treasured weapon had polished off the murderous Cruz Delgado when he attempted to bury her alive. It had been her faithful, accurate ally in countless tight corners.

Without it now, Vivian Legrand felt helpless, stripped and naked.

"Maybe we ought to keep on searching her. Don't we owe it to ourselves, Luis?" one of her malodorous captors jeered. And then Vivian's jade eyes rested upon him for a moment, and he recoiled. Denizen of the lowest underworld that he was, he could not stand the impact of her murderous glance. It actually seemed to him to shorten his days.

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"Shut up, Pedro," said Moraga. "Go and sit down—all of you! You, too, *Señora* Legrand."

Vivian, however, stood perfectly still. Though the sharp blade no longer pricked her, she felt the near presence of the fifth, the unseen opponent. He mistrusted her like Moraga, and awaite any emergency.

"*Señora,* if you have listened, as you must have done, you know how much our plans concern you," Moraga began with a smirk. "We propose to exchange your life and Wylie's life for the Cruz Delgado loot which you have obtained by some trick or other. Skipping a good deal of what I intended—since you are good enough to come here, and without police escort—we can strike our bargain right away."

The agreeable tone of the fiendish murderer's voice did not deceive Vivian. She recalled that Luis Moraga, from the petty crook once hired by her and Wylie, had risen to his current notoriety by taking the savings of French servant girls and then carving the victims up, and putting his brand—the crossed knife slashes—upon them for the police to discover.

She realized acutely that she must spar for time, while endeavoring to think of some cunning counter-stratagem.

"You are wrong," she said. "I know little about your plans. I came here, following her—" and she pointed to Carlotta, who jerked back her pretty head, uneasily— "because, without provocation, she flung a knife at me. I am ready," she added in a curiously submissive tone, "to hear what you have to suggest. What bargain?"

Was this the dread Lady from Hell? Carlotta curled her painted lips in a self-satisfied sneer. However, a flicker of wariness in Moraga's dark eyes informed Vivian that, as she had suspected, he was not one easily taken in. With him she would have even to excel her performance against Cruz Delgado.

"The bargain is this," said the leader. "Tell us where we can put our hands on Cruz's treasure. At least a million pesetas that double-dealer must have gathered together, cheating his own band the way he did. . . ."

"Hardly six hundred thousand pesetas," Vivian answered with casual amiability. "You see, my friend—even in death, he cheats!"

"You admit you have the treasure?"

"Why not," she shrugged, "since you seem to know." Vivian smiled a quiet smile, as if to herself, as if she were recollecting something very pleasing, far away from this sordid scene. She swayed a little as she stood before Moraga. The smile went away and her green eyes turned expressionless.

Moraga cleared his throat, then rapped with his fingers on the arm of the chair. Carlotta was growing restless. Vivian's exceptional beauty was only too apparent. At the moment she might still represent to Luis Moraga a fortune, six hundred thousand pesetas. The savings of a thousand serving wenches! But when, Carlotta was wondering, would Moraga's keen eyes remind him that Vivian Legrand was the loveliest woman he ever had seen?

Vivian herself was wondering something very similar. And Moraga—what was Moraga wondering?

"YOU had better take a seat, *Señora* Legrand," the Cross Killer urged after a long moment of thoughtful silence.

"To be sociable, you mean? Hardly, my friend. You seem to forget I'm a prisoner here. These people—these

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scurrying rats of yours, Moraga"—and she looked hard at the girl, Carlotta—"they have been too damned free with their knives, I think. While I'm a prisoner I prefer to stand. Though, of course, I suppose you can force me to pretend I relish this interview."

Her graceful form was swaying again, just perceptibly, and her eyes were low-lidded and discreetly mocking.

Moraga sought to concentrate upon the intoxicating thought of six hundred thousand pesetas. Yet there was Vivian, the Lady from Hell, celebrity of the international underworld, and arguing in every curving line of her exquisite being that Hell was a fashionable watering place—like Trouville, Biarritz, or Cannes—and she its veritable queen.

"You will tell us—tell me," he deliberately amended, "how to find this Delgado money. And when I know you have spoken the truth, I'll guarantee on my oath, *señora,* to put you and Wylie safely across the frontier of France. Or aboard any vessel you like—sailing for England, France, America . . ."

Vivian had been watching each of her opponents through narrowed eyes. It was the fidgeting and utterly ignored Carlotta who suddenly gave her the warning signal to spring into action.

The Spanish girl's eyes were handsomely large and dark, and they seemed to darken and grow larger. She opened her mouth, starting to cry out. But no sound came. What was it that she saw?

Vivian guessed—and so Vivian acted. . . .

Graceful as a frightened antelope, she whirled about and dodged the stiletto holder, whose surprise was a kind of paralysis. Beyond him the curtains masking the doorway were bulging peculiarly, quivering almost as from a supernatural touch. And then a loud banshee wail issued from behind the billowing curtains—an incredible, eerie sound that mingled on the instant with a shrill yelp uttered at last by the stricken, superstitious Carlotta.

Luis Moraga sprang to his feet, as did the others. Vivian was already past the only member of the band who had been standing, the short, swarthy one, now seen by her for the first time, who had thought to block her retreat. Into the curtains she lunged, parting them deftly.

The interruption had come from Adrian Wylie. Vivian had immediately sensed that. Wylie, the scholarly aid who personally had no use for violent measures, yet who never in all their years together had failed her in a pinch!

He had staggered into the Posada, feigning drunkenness, to learn how Vivian was faring on her rash mission. Not seeing her, he had become alarmed and so he had adroitly worked his way to the rear of the crude establishment. Thus it had come about that he got into position to surprise Moraga and the others, just as a few minutes earlier Vivian herself had been overtaken by a surprise stroke.

Wylie well understood the superstitious nature of the average illiterate Spanish peasant. He had therefore resorted to the ancient ruse of making an eerie sound, an uncanny wailing noise, to launch his reserve attack.

"Quick, Doc!" Vivian gasped as the doorway curtains spread apart. And she felt the welcome chill of a heavy weapon thrust, ready to shoot, into her outstretched hand.

Round she swung, a new Vivian, a tigerish Lady from Hell, to challenge

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her recent tormentors. So swift were these events, not one of the five in the room had managed as yet to draw a gun. Vivian's own small automatic lay where it had been tossed aside, on the center table; and now Carlotta leaped to grab it up.

"Don't be a fool twice in one day!" Vivian snapped.

Her heavy revolver exploded loudly in the confining space of the small back room. The slug kicked up splinters from the table top, and the splinters tore at Carlotta's smooth, olive-tinted forearm. She drew back with a cry. The automatic stayed where it was.

The man Pedro was taking aim with a knife. Vivian knew well the symptoms, the arm motion. She fired a second time, and Pedro collapsed like an ox, with a .45 slug in his chest.

"Come on, Vi," Wylie urged, moving his own weapon in a slow, menacing arc to control Moraga and the two other ruffians. "Nothing more to be done here. And there's a lot more of this kind of tough sitting just outside—"

"But first, Doc, I want back my gun," said Vivian Legrand. Her gesture was imperious. "You there, Luis, hand it to me."

Moraga seemed to grasp her subtle and savage intention. And so he obeyed her with a sardonic, courtly bow.

"My compliments, *Señora* Legrand! You shoot well, and you shoot to kill, eh? As Cruz Delgado, I hear, found out? . . . If you expected me to make some move, giving you the excuse to shoot me down in self-defense—but no, you see, I fool you, *señora*—I simply oblige and hand over the little gun."

The poise of the Cross Killer was superb. Vivian's manner toward him changed so abruptly that even Wylie, her most devoted adherent, who surely knew all her moods, was stunned with bewilderment.

"You are smart, Luis," she smiled. "That is good. Doc, you must remember Luis Moraga—an old side-kick of ours in the Paris days, long ago?"

"Moraga—why—why—yes, Vi, to be sure," said her partner, recovering his breath and, though wondering, playing up.

"Don't you think Luis is just the right man to get us and our share of the Delgado fortune safely out of Spain?" she said.

"Our share?"

"Naturally, Doc, we'll have to split with Luis if he and his mob pitch in and help us fool the police."

Carlotta started jealously to interrupt. Moraga turned, quick as a cat, and struck her, knocking her down. Back swung his foot, to kick the prostrate girl. . . .

"No, wait, Luis," Vivian objected. "We've no time to waste. Get up, Carlotta—and keep a civil tongue in your head. This is strictly business."

"And what does the *señora* propose?" Moraga asked, turning back to her with another courtly bow, grotesque, indeed, in view of his recent brutal demonstration. "You say we shall split the Cruz Delgado treasure?"

"If you serve my friend and me faithfully, Luis—remembering the old days as I do. We admit needing help, and being strange here in Santander—"

"Where the treasure is?" he asked overanxiously.

"Say rather where the key to the treasure is, Luis."

Vivian had him completely enthralled. He was thinking of the treasure, but also of this fascinating woman who seemed to his conceited nature

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to go with the treasure. Suppose he played his cards just right. Wylie was no adversary worth mentioning. He would, of course, need to dispose—yes, dispose—of Carlotta. Then he and Vivian, on the profits of Cruz Delgado's years of fruitful, daring banditry. . . . Moraga's dark face took on a swarthy flush . . . it was a heady wine, his thoughts, making his pulse leap!

"Come on, Doc—I'm tired. Let's be going," the Lady from Hell put in suddenly. "Moraga, beware of trickery. If I trust you, well—I know how to repay the loyal—and punish the treacherous. Come and see us tomorrow at our hotel." And then she added a taunting remark which she could not have resisted speaking: "Carlotta is stopping there, too, as you no doubt know. I shall only detain you a short time, Luis, discussing the business of the treasure."

His attempt to be gallant was next door to servile. "But I am at the *señora's* disposal, remember, for as long as she may need me," the Basque desperado proclaimed.

Vivian gestured with the .45 she still pointed defensively. "Maybe then you'd better prove it, my Luis," said she, "by lending that pal of yours I had to shoot some first aid."

The man Pedro groaned.

CHAPTER IV

A Full Coffin

BACK at last in their hotel, Adrian Wylie fired the question he had all this while been withholding: "Speaking, Vi, as one whose breath you often take away, may I wonder what the devil you plan to do with a sewer advertisement like the Cross Killer?"

"I once knew a man who enjoyed *spending* sixty thousand francs," said the Lady from Hell.

"Good Lord! Not meaning, in addition to everything else, you're scheming to drop Moraga into the laps of the French police?"

Vivian's smile had faded and her expression was not a little sinister. "I hate Moraga and am a bit afraid of what he still can do to us here, Doc." Quickly she repeated every word that she had remembered of the conversation she had overheard before being surprised in her eavesdropping. "Besides—I've got a sore spot on my back where that cursed stiletto prodded and pricked me. You'll have to put an antiseptic on it, Doc. And because it was Luis Moraga who drew first blood in his war upon us, I believe he is bound to die. The French want to guillotine him. But if we can't arrange a deal on that basis, I fancy I'll kill him myself—for nothing."

Next day, however, when she welcomed Luis Moraga to their promised "conference," there was not a trace of this enmity to be detected in the gracious manner of the Lady from Hell.

"How is it," she inquired with seeming admiration, "that you can come here openly, in the broad light of day? I hadn't expected more than a message from you till after nightfall."

"But, *señora,* I have the police of this place in my pocket," he boasted. Which confirmed Vivian's own private impression and explained her eagerness to drop Moraga into a pocket controlled by herself. "And now—your plan—how are we to work together, collecting Cruz Delgado's treasure?" he urged.

"What I know," Vivian explained, "I know from Cruz's own mother. Cruz confessed the hiding place to her

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and to one other, an old priest. It is really in the priest's house—"

"And where is that?"

"See here—" With elaborate caution Vivian disclosed to him a paper, old and rumpled, on which her talented partner had labored late into the night. It was actually a dummy of the original Cruz Delgado drawing, taken from the hollow knife handle. And it purported to locate the treasure in the cellar of a house occupied by the alleged priest. It even located the house.

"This is very near the French border," said Moraga.

"You fear that, then?"

"I fear nothing. But I am not on good terms with the frogs."

"After the twentieth murder, the Sûreté gets sort of frenzied, eh? I don't want you to run foolish risks, Luis."

"Only this priest is a danger, *señora*—we shall have to kill him."

"You'd even kill a priest to get at this loot?"

"But I did once kill a very saintly man, *señora*. It was really nothing to me. In fact, a waste of time, for all that I gained was a few altar vessels. Silver, not gold, you understand!"

Vivian's green eyes were shining, and the conceited monster believed that his boasting was already endearing him to the Lady from Hell.

"Well," said she, "that takes care of the priest who guards the treasure, Luis. Now we come to the matter of the coffin. *Señora* Delgado must be buried here in Santander, that has been arranged. I have had her body transferred only today to a fine metallic coffin. The one which came from Zucorra we need on our expedition."

"I do not understand. A coffin—the *señora* jokes a little. No?" Then the accomplished murderer hastened to apologize when he saw his intended fair one frowning. "I did not mean—"

"Where are your wits today? You had them last night."

"It is that girl, Carlotta. Quarreling, nagging—she is jealous."

"Never mind. Listen to me—we can't move into a village, strangers—just like that, go to the priest's house and kill him, and search the house, and ride away with the treasure worth more than half a million pesetas."

Instantly he was on the alert. "You said six hundred thousand, *señora*. For my share I'm counting on three hundred thousand."

"Not one peseta of which you will get, Luis, unless you handle this just as I say. We can't take the body of *Señora* Delgado to the French frontier, because the Spanish authorities expect a burial service here in Santander. But if some other person died, and was to be buried there in the frontier village—and if the old priest who holds Cruz's secret was asked to officiate, service to be held in his home—how long would that allow us to search and find the treasure?"

Moraga was jubilant, and Vivian, behind those greenish, veiled eyes, was thinking—the fool is swallowing it all.

"I understand now the great plan, *señora*. I apologize. And I am ready to do my part. You first need a body to be taken by train to the frontier village—and the rest should be easy. I'll provide the body."

"At once? Whose?"

"If the *señora* has no sentimental objection, I'll kill the girl, Carlotta. . . ."

Vivian had very urgent objections. It would be all too easy to have this ruthless renegade's infatuation for herself involve her in the girl's homicide as an accessory before the fact.

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"A coffin, and I have one already," she insisted, "can be shipped empty. We'll meet near the village at the frontier, Luis, and fill it with stones. That will do nicely—and you can resume your practice of homicide after we divide the treasure."

His eyes flickered oddly, and for a moment she believed her sarcasm had been understood.

"Let's settle all the details here and now," she said. "Just arrange with your gang so that Doctor Wylie and I can leave Santander unmolested. We'll provide the coffin. You travel by a different route. And to show you, Luis, that I like you and mean to play fair—you can keep half of the drawing of the priest's house which I obtained from Cruz Delgado's mother, when she lay dying."

While he smirked, sure of his conquest, she tore the faked drawing—hardly yet a day old—in two equal parts.

"All goes well!" he cried. "And you, *señora*, are adorable. . . ."

"Compliments can wait. But remember, you're to make sure that your people and the underworld of Santander do nothing to delay the departure of Wylie and myself for the village close to the French frontier."

FORTY-EIGHT hours later, to their admitted amazement, Wylie and Vivian arrived almost within rifle shot of their goal—France—carrying along the treasure laden coffin.

"'It's too good to be true—too easy to be really safe," Adrian Wylie objected.

"'After all the risk and thought we have given it, and all my playing on Moraga's vanity like a pipe-organ—what do you mean, too easy?" Vivian retorted.

At dusk, strictly according to plan, Luis Moraga joined them at the roadside tavern. He was bubbling over with good cheer.

"Here is my half of the secret drawing," Luis exulted.

"And here is our half. Now—about weighting the coffin—" Vivian began.

Moraga was all eagerness to outdistance Wylie in her presence. He sprang forward and, before either of them could object, began tugging at the lid of the empty coffin.

"Wait!" exclaimed Wylie.

"Let him alone, Doc," said Vivian.

Luis had the coffin lid off. His ejaculation was a blend of amazement, suspicion and wildest glee.

"*Señora*—you were really joking about the priest—"

"I'm a great joker, Luis. That's one murder I'm afraid you can't count upon. But wait—don't risk another joke. Bend down, my friend—run your hands through that stuff, coins and cash. More than seven hundred thousand pesetas!"

And the Cross Killer, hypnotized by her words, her compelling beauty and his own lusty greed, did bend down, running his hands through the hoard.

The arm of the Lady from Hell swung up, and down smashed the revolver butt. And into the coffin tumbled the loathsome fellow, slack and insensible, tricked and beaten.

"'You bind and gag him, Doc," said Vivian coolly. "'Then we'll fasten down the lid. Oh, there are air holes bored in it. . . . I'll see about hiring a motor car to drive on into France. I guess I've thought of just about everything. Wired Count Morales to wire the French police that Luis Moraga was "heading" their way."

"'Did you, really, Vi?" her partner murmured. "And after all this clean-

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up, will you consent to a long, restful vacation—something pretty close to an honest-to-goodness retirement?"

"Yes," said she with earnest simplicity. "Dealing with rats like Delgado and now this Moraga has given me an overdose of underworld, Doc—as you must be rightly happy to hear."

FRANCE admitted them, and Frenchmen welcomed them. With just a degree of misgiving, Wylie and Vivian Legrand found themselves ostentatiously escorted to the headquarters of the commandant of the frontier police.

"Madame Legrand, I am enchanted!" that gracious gentleman exclaimed. "I have had Count Morales' wire about you. And what is this—about Moraga? Have you taken him prisoner? If so, you'll be agreeably surprised to learn that the reward has gone up—like shares on the Bourse. It's now seventy-five thousand francs."

"Dead or alive?"

"But certainly. And where is he?"

"Alive—but hidden in a coffin, sir," Wylie said. "Just a little ruse in crossing the frontier, Moraga's pull with the Spanish police being rather a troublesome commodity."

"As we have good reason to deplore. Morales in Madrid does all he can, of course, but—"

The coffin lid came off, and Luis Moraga was dragged forth. Vivian and Wylie transferred the Delgado cash to their personal luggage, packing clothing instead in the coffin to cushion their prisoner.

"It is Luis Moraga all right, and the guillotine is sharpened for him, the unspeakable killer—"

"Wait, sir," an official interrupted. "This man is really in very bad shape. Seems to be suffocating from the gag."

"Strip it off him, then," the commandant ordered. "Send for Doctor Massard at once."

Wylie spoke softly to Vivian. "Those are not *my* knots. Did you tamper with the gag?"

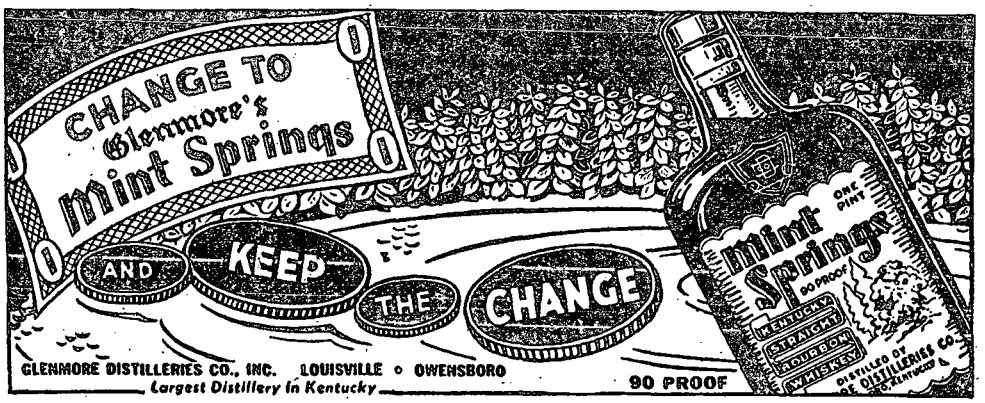
"Do you honestly want him *not* to be gagged, Doc—and to talk to the French about us?"

The police surgeon came and examined Luis Moraga.

"The gag nearly suffocated him—it's the Cross Killer himself, Massard," said the commandant. "A great capture!"

"Nearly suffocated, sir? This man is dead. . . ."

"What," said Vivian Legrand, "can you expect from a coffin?"



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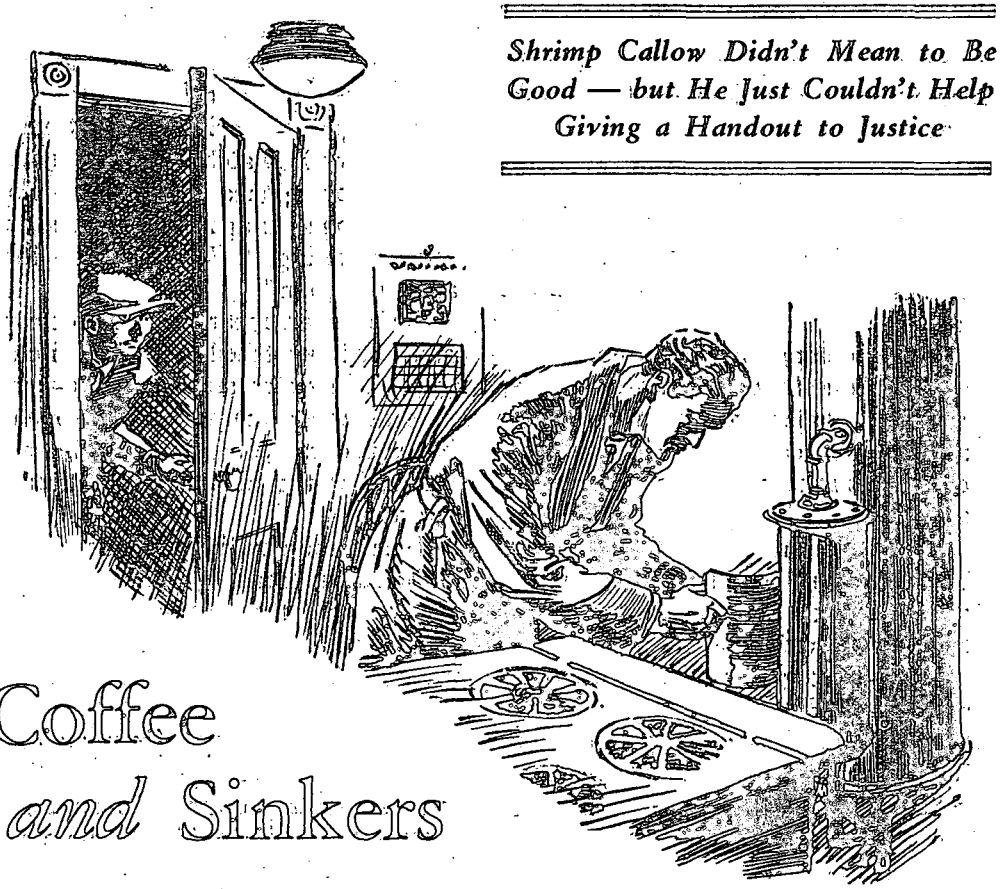
Shrimp Callow Didn't Mean to Be Good — but He Just Couldn't Help Giving a Handout to Justice



From where the Shrimp stood, all he could see was the man's broad back

Coffee and Sinkers

By Joseph F. Hook

SHRIMP CALLOW stood shivering just within the door, fingers pressed tightly against his lips in an effort to silence his chattering teeth.

He was a little bit of a man, hungry, gaunt, ragged. His weasel eyes were red-rimmed from the blast of winter wind, and there was a furtive expression in them. His head was still almost bald, from the last prison haircut, and the color of his face was like paste.

He remained perfectly quiet until the warmth of the house thawed out his aching muscles.

The street lights illuminated the drawn blinds, but the glow was sufficient to reveal to his sharp eyes the contents of the room.

He moved over to the things which past experience had proved to him were of value — cloisonné vases, pieces of Satsuma ware, objects of jade, silver and gold. He touched them tentatively with eager fingers, realizing that the value of any one of them would keep him in food and warmth for a week, even after the fence had beaten him down to his price.

But in a house like that the Shrimp knew there

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would be other things of greater value, like jewelry—stuff easier to carry, easier to conceal. So he stole into the next room, a den, and used his flashlight.

A creaking sound came suddenly from the stairs which led off from the hall. The Shrimp darted behind the portières, his eyes cutting through the darkness. Footsteps started down the stairs.

The creaking became more pronounced, the footsteps nearer. They halted a moment at the foot of the stairs. Then came the sound of slippers slap-slapping toward the rear of the house.

The Shrimp made out the faint outline of a figure in a dressing-gown. A light flashed on in the kitchen, and then the Shrimp could see the man plainly.

He was a big man, powerfully built, handsome. He paused, fingers still on the light switch, glancing back over his shoulder in the direction of the stairs he had just descended.

A woman called softly from the head of the stairs.

"Is that you, Mr. Walgren?"

The man gave a slight start. "Yes, nurse," he replied. "I came down to get a sandwich. Didn't eat much dinner."

The Shrimp heard a door close above, but he did not take his eyes off the man who still stood in the kitchen doorway.

Presently the man walked over to the water heater beside the gas range, opened the iron door, and seemed to be doing something with the burner. From where the Shrimp stood, all he could see was the man's broad back.

"Goin' to heat water for a bath," the Shrimp surmised. "Swell! When he gets into it, I'll get busy."

The ex-con listened for the sound of a match being struck, and was surprised when it failed to come. Instead, the big man straightened up and crossed over to the refrigerator.

"Changed his mind," the Shrimp guessed, while watching him open the refrigerator, glance inside, then close it. "Changed it again," he added, his mouth watering. "Well, what he don't eat, I will soon."

The big man apeared in the doorway again and switched off the kitchen light. The stairs creaked protestingly as he ascended them. A door opened above, and someone spoke. The man replied, but the Shrimp couldn't catch a word.

He left the den like a shadow, crept up the stairs, treading close to the wall side to avoid the creaking sound that had marked the big man's upward progress. At the top, he crouched down, peered ahead.

An oblong of light from an open door played on the opposite wall of the landing. In the room the Shrimp saw a woman in white, evidently the nurse. She was seated in an easy chair beside the bed, and the big man stood at the foot of it, so that the Shrimp could not see the occupant to whom the man spoke.

"Are you feeling better, dear?" he inquired.

The reply was weak, distressed, pulling. "I—I don't think so, Jim. I wish you'd stay with me. I'm—I'm so afraid!"

The big man moved to the side of the bed, and then the Shrimp saw the sick woman's face. It was pale, wan, marked with lines of suffering.

"You may go to bed, nurse," the big man said. "I'll sit up with Mrs. Walgren tonight."

The nurse rose, picked up the book she had been reading, and yawned.

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"Did you find something to eat?" she inquired sleepily.

"Thanks, yes," the man replied.

"A swell liar," the Shrimp observed to himself, "but a real guy. Don't find anything much in the icebox, and didn't want to bother anybody about it."

The nurse left the sick room, crossing the landing into her own. "Call me if there's any change," she said, and closed the door.

The Shrimp cursed his luck. It would be some time before that nurse fell asleep. But that wasn't all that worried him, now. There wouldn't be anything much of value in her room, because nurses, as a rule, did not own valuable rocks or ice.

The place for those things would be in the sick woman's room. Or the man's. In the first instance, there would be no chance to search that. As for the second, how could he cross that oblong of light, without being seen, and reach the man's bedroom beyond unless the latter closed the door to the sick room?

"No ice, no rocks," the Shrimp sighed. "Well, damn my luck anyhow. Still, there's them things downstairs. Bulky, though. And the fences don't like 'em. Too easy to identify. But here goes."

He was about to creep down the stairs when the woman in the bed spoke again.

"I'd like a drink of water, Jim."

The big man crossed over to the table. His back was to the Shrimp so that he could not see, but he did hear the tinkle of a pitcher against a glass. The man handed it to the woman. She sipped at it, and handed it back, making a wry face.

"Nothing tastes quite right anymore, Jim," she complained.

The big man took the glass, went down on his knees by the bed, and held it to the woman's lips.

"That's imagination, dear," he said gently. "Please drink some more. It's good for you. For my sake. Won't you?"

"Jim, I'd do anything for you," the woman said, and drank. "Oh, how I love you!"

"Then if you love me," the man said, "try to get well, Agnes. Now close your eyes and try to sleep."

"Aw, phooey!" the Shrimp muttered in disgust. "I would pick out a sick joint!"

He crept silently back down the stairs and made his way into the kitchen. He opened the refrigerator and helped himself to the food within, stuffing it into his mouth ravenously. He felt like a new man after that.

He went into the front room and put a cloisonné in one pocket, a second in another. Bulky things. Yes, indeed. And the other articles seemed equally bulky.

The Shrimp patted his person. It felt to him, standing there in the gloom, that he must look like a sackful of boxes—all angles and knobs.

Outside, the wind howled, and flying snow rasped across the window panes. There was drifted snow, and that meant tracks, and mighty slow walking. And cops to dodge too. If one of them should take after him . . .

The Shrimp patted the bulges on his person again, and fear suddenly gripped him. It was his first job since leaving the pen, and the ghastly monotony of those past ten years behind steel bars flashed before his mind's eye. He shuddered.

No use saying the pen didn't have its effect on a guy's nerves. The Shrimp wasn't the man he had been ten years

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before, and now he knew it. The pen had done things to him. Hardened him? Perhaps. But it had taken something out of him, too.

"Golly!" he muttered, and stood there shivering and arguing with himself. "Golly!"

He had the stuff on him now, and it would be easy to slip from the house. But, perhaps, not so easy to get past the cops. One moment he felt himself capable of anything. The next, he was a limp rag, remembering that ten-year hitch up the river.

"You're a damn fool," he cursed himself, even while replacing the articles where he had found them. "You've gone soft!"

A few minutes later he was out of the house and breasting the storm, chilled to the bone. All the way to the cheap flophouse he never met a cop. Not even a prowl car.

"Didn't I tell you you was a damned fool?" he muttered. "Just a nervous runt. . . .oh, no, that hitch in stir didn't do nothin' to you, did it? Aw, phooey!"

"SAY, can you gimme a dime for a cup o' Java and some sinkers? I ain't et today, mister."

The stranger handed the ragged runt a quarter and hurried on in the teeth of the gale.

Shrimp Callow entered an all-night coffee shop and sat down on a counter stool. A bulky man eased down beside him on the next one. Then a hand fell heavily on the runt's shoulder, and he turned colder than the storm outside.

He raised red-rimmed ferret eyes, and gave a quick start. The man beside him was Detective Andy Molloy, who didn't look a day older than when he had arrested the Shrimp for burglary, ten years before.

"Why, hello, Shrimp," the detective grinned. "So you're out, huh? How's tricks?"

The Shrimp gulped, finally finding his voice. "Not so good." He ordered coffee and doughnuts and shoved the quarter across the counter. The detective picked it up and handed it back to him, and then spoke to the waiter.

"Make it two," he said, "on me."

"What's the gag?" the runt inquired suspiciously. "Are you gonna ride me, now? Why don't you give a guy a chance? I ain't done nothin'."

"Except ten years, Shrimp," the detective smiled. "Now quit slopping over at the mouth. Nobody's riding you—yet. Just happened to spot you coming in here, that's all."

They drank and ate for a few minutes in silence.

"Look sorta peaked," the detective observed presently. "Still, I'd rather see you ragged than—well, the way you used to dress. You savvy what I mean. Tried to get a job?"

"Yeah, I've tried," the runt replied bitterly. "Shoveled snow, some."

"How about the gas company, Shrimp? You used to be their best repairman."

"You ain't even funny, Molloy. They'd kick me outa the office, and you know it. Turn me loose in swell homes, like I uster? Phooey!"

"You know enough now to repair ranges and heaters and keep your hands off other things."

"Oh, I could do it, all right. But try tellin' that to ol' Rathbone, the manager."

"No, *you* try it, Shrimp. I'm only suggesting. And here's a word to the wise, feller. Cut out the panhandling. If a cop picked you up—good-by parole."

The detective paid the bill, turned

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up the collar of his overcoat, and went out.

Although the Shrimp had been thoroughly warmed by the hot coffee, he shivered. That had been a close call. Suppose he had pocketed some of those bulky articles in the Walgren home. The very thought sent cold chills racing up and down his spine.

"Him follerin' me in here wasn't no happenstance," the Shrimp muttered, getting off the stool. "Bet he's been tailin' me for blocks. Paid for the sinkers and Java, huh? Just a stall to look me over. Glad I got that hunch, back there in that house."

But the Shrimp knew he was lying when he called it a hunch. It was a plain case of cold feet, lack of the old nerve at the last moment, which was self-evident now in the way he was shaking.

Nor did the jittery feeling leave him. During the course of the week he ran into Detective Molloy several times, and each time the icy hand of fear gripped him. He felt sure he was being tailed. Yes, the cops were riding him, damn them. Nevertheless, he did manage to get in a little panhandling.

But he was finding it increasingly difficult to tackle the next victim because the detective's warning about the parole kept ringing in his ears. He hated the thought of having to take another rap for a small job. If a rap was in the cards, he wanted to be sent up the river for something big, so that the boys back there wouldn't give him the horse laugh for being a piker.

But what, he asked himself, was the big job to be? The old gang had long since been broken up and the remnants had fled before the law. Their successors in crime didn't know him, wouldn't trust him, didn't want any part of him. And, on top of that, he knew, deep down inside him, he didn't have the nerve to tackle a big job alone.

IT was early afternoon and bitterly cold. The Shrimp hadn't eaten since breakfast chiefly because his attempts at panhandling had been frustrated by the sudden appearance of sundry uniformed cops.

Limp and nervous from repeated close shaves, he leaned against the window of Tony Galucci's grocery store, wondering what to do next.

A car drew up to the curb. Two men got out and entered the store, leaving the engine running. The Shrimp sized them up in a glance. They looked to him like men who might be sympathetic to a touch, and he made up his mind to tackle them when they came out.

He could hear the mumble of their voices through the heavy plate glass window. Suddenly the voices rose in anger.

Just as the Shrimp turned again to glance at them, he saw one of the men draw something black from an overcoat pocket. There followed a flash, a dull report, and the storekeeper slumped across the counter.

"Golly, he's croaked him!" the Shrimp gasped.

The two men left the store just as a cop turned the corner. Screams rang out above the din of traffic as Tony Galucci's wife rushed from the store in the wake of the two men. They hesitated a moment at the car, looking back fleetingly at the screeching woman.

"Murder! Pol-eece!" she shrieked.

The two men suddenly caught sight of the cop, who was pounding down the sidewalk toward them, reaching for the gun under his overcoat. One of the

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men raised his right hand, and the black automatic jetted flame.

The cop stopped dead in his tracks, sank slowly to his knees, still fumbling for his gun.

He got it out just as the man who had wounded him started to enter the car. The heavy service gun cracked, and the gunman slumped down on the running-board. His companion grasped him around the middle and boosted him into the car, and started to follow.

Again the policeman's gun barked, and the second man fell forward on top of the first, half in, half out of the car. Then the wounded cop sprawled out on the sidewalk.

Instantly the traffic became a snarl. People came running from all directions, crowding around. In another moment, the sidewalk was jammed by a milling, seething mob.

The Shrimp came to life with a jerk, cast a hurried glance over his shoulder at the crowd, then darted off on the run. He had suddenly realized what it might mean for an ex-con to be caught near the scene of a killing. A visit to Headquarters was the one thing he dreaded most.

He put a number of blocks between himself and Tony Galucci's store, before his wind gave out, forcing a halt. He sagged against the county courthouse wall, gasping for breath.

At that moment, Detective Andy Molloy swung around the corner, and the Shrimp gave a startled cry. It appeared to him as if the detective had been trailing him, but he did not wait to find out.

Instead, he dodged into the building and ran up the broad stairs. His intentions were to lose himself in the spacious corridors, then dart down the back stairs, and out. But he found further progress halted at the third floor.

The corridors were jammed with people. The Shrimp hunched down like a football player, and dived into the crowd. His progress was followed by shoves, to all of which he was oblivious.

He reached the courtroom door, and ducked under the outstretched arms of a bailiff, who was doing his best to keep the crowd in the corridor back. Then he bumped into two burly state patrolmen, and that ended the forward movement. He shrank back against the courtroom wall, and pretended to be interested in the court proceeding, although, because of his short stature, he could see nothing at all.

Presently he stole a glance toward the door, and his heart skipped a beat. Detective Molloy was just passing the bailiff. The officer stood there a moment, his sharp eyes roaming over the spectators until they rested on the Shrimp. Then Molloy moved to his side.

"Ridin' me, huh?" the Shrimp whispered savagely. "Well, I didn't have nothin' to do with them two hoods, if that's what you're after. Never saw 'em before. Honest!"

The detective's eyes reflected his surprise. "Hoods?" he repeated. "Say, what the hell you talking about, Shrimp?"

The runt cursed himself for a fool. He suspected in a second that the detective knew nothing of the killings. So the Shrimp racked his brains for some likely yarn that would cover up his slip of the tongue.

Thought, however, was out of the question now, because the detective had grabbed his wrist and was slowly twisting it.

"Been up to some mischief, huh, Shrimp?" he whispered, bending down and talking into the runt's ear. "Well,

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that's what I thought when I saw you duck in here. Come clean, or I'll twist your hand clear off."

The Shrimp gasped out the story in a few whispered sentences. The only other sounds in the crowded courtroom were those of a lawyer's voice, droning on and on, loud whispers and shuffling feet on the linoleum.

"All right, let's scram out of here," the detective said.

Suddenly the judge on the bench spoke up. "This court will recess until ten tomorrow. Spectators will please keep their seats until after the jury has retired."

In a few moments, the crowd pushed toward the exits, loudly discussing the trial. Detective Molloy took the Shrimp by the shoulders and pushed him ahead. The crowd moved slowly out into the corridor, and came to a standstill at the elevator, despite all the extra police and courthouse attachés could do to keep them moving toward the stairs.

Some of them caught sight of the detective and the runt. In a few minutes they had forced a passage for them to the elevator, where the sheriff and several deputies were waiting with a handcuffed prisoner.

"'Lo, Andy," the sheriff smiled. "Looks like you might be in a hurry to go some place. Sorry, but you'll have to wait till we get this guy down into the cells."

The elevator shot upward, and stopped. The crowd surged forward to watch the prisoner loaded into it. While the officers fought them back, the attendant slammed the steel-barred elevator door shut.

Detective Molloy turned to the runt. "Better take the stairs, I guess," he suggested. "It'll be quicker than—"

He paused to stare in surprise at the Shrimp. The latter's eyes were big and round and glued on the elevator as it began its descent.

"That guy!" the Shrimp exclaimed, pointing at the manacled man. "Who is he? What's he on trial for?"

"What's that to you?" the detective demanded. "Come on."

The Shrimp hung back. "Listen, Molloy," he cried. "I've saw that guy before! What's his racket?"

"Oh, all right, if you must know," the detective said impatiently. "His name's Walgren, and he's on trial for murder. Poisoned his wife with arsenic, to get fifty grand insurance. The trial's just started. I think the D.A.'s going to have a tough time getting a conviction, because the investigators can't find out where Walgren bought the poison. Wonder you wouldn't read the papers once in a while."

"Arsenic!" the Shrimp exclaimed. "And they don't know where he got it, eh? Well, I do, Molloy! *I saw him get it!*"

The detective spun the little runt around and looked him square in the eye.

"Say, Shrimp, if you're trying to be funny, I'll—"

"I'm givin' it to you straight!" the runt insisted. "Where's the D.A. I can tell him—"

That was as far as he got, for the detective was already dragging him after him and into the district attorney's private office.

The D.A. looked up in surprise from a conference with two of his assistants. "What is it, Molly?" he inquired. He surveyed the Shrimp with a gaze which was curious, cold and unfriendly. Something in the Shrimp shriveled sere as he tried to stare back with an air of nonchalance.

"This runt," the detective began, shoving the Shrimp forward, "claims

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he saw Walgren get the arsenic he fed to his wife."

The D.A. scrutinized the runt's face closely. Recollection slowly dawned in his eyes.

"Yes, I remember you now," he said, nodding. "You got a ten-year rap, for burglary. Gas company repairman and burglar combined. All right, spill it." The tone of his voice sounded as if he would put little faith in anything the ex-con might say.

"He got that arsenic in the house," the Shrimp replied.

"How clever!" the D.A. sneered. "Naturally he had it in the house. But where did he *buy* it? That's what we want to find out."

"He didn't buy it. He didn't hafta," the Shrimp said. "It's in any house where they use gas. I know, 'cause I worked for the gas company for years. You take me to that house and I'll show you—"

"That's what I want—to be shown," the D.A. snapped, jamming on his hat. "Come on, Molloy. Bring that runt along."

They did not wait for the elevator, but ran down the stairs and out of the building to the D.A.'s car.

"What where you doing in that house?" he demanded of the Shrimp as the car roared away. "Up to your old tricks again?"

"I—er—well, yes; but I didn't lift nothin'," the Shrimp whined. "Guess I lost my nerve. That's on the square." He turned to the detective beside him. "It was the night you bought the sinkers and Java," he added. "Remember? You know I didn't have—"

"Go on, Shrimp, and spill the works," the detective urged. "There'll be time enough later on to find out if you lifted anything or not."

Shrimp's account of what he saw in the Walgren home that night ended with the screech of brakes as the car pulled up in front of it. A cop admitted them to the building.

Shrimp led the way to the kitchen, opened the gas waterheater door, and stood aside to enable the others to see.

"There's where he got the poison," he explained, pointing to a whitish powder that covered the tray under the burner as well as the copper water coil. "All them old-style gas water-heaters is arsenic plants. The intense heat on the copper does it. I know 'cause I've cleaned thousands of 'em. Gotta keep a rag over your mouth and nose while you're doin' it."

"What a break!" the D.A. exclaimed. "I've a picture of Walgren burning on the hot seat. Come on." He started for the front door.

"Where to, now?" the detective inquired.

"For a chemist," the D.A. flung back over his shoulder. "Got to compare that stuff with what the autopsy showed in the woman's stomach. And Molloy—"

"Yes?"

"Put that runt where we can reach him. Into the car, now. Where'll I drop you off?"

"Headquarters," the detective replied.

The Shrimp gulped and sat up with a jerk, whining.

"Ain't that a hell of a deal? Jugged 'cause I come clean! Helped you guys out, and see what I get! Well, I'd oughter've knowed better than to trust a damned dick. Anyway," he added as an afterthought, "I'll get a free supper."

The car stopped at Headquarters, and then roared away again. Detective Molloy consulted his wrist-watch.

"Four-thirty," he observed.

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"Time!" the Shrimp snorted in disgust. "What'll time mean to me, from now on?"

"I was just thinking," the detective said. "The gas company's offices don't close till five. Rathbone, the manager, won't have left yet. Come on, Shrimp. We'll go see him."

"Him? See him about what?" the Shrimp exploded. "You wanna tell him what a slick dick you are, pickin' me up for that Walgren job? I tell yer, I didn't lift nothin'!"

"No, not exactly," the detective grinned. "Rathbone's a friend of mine. I'm going to convince him that he needs another gas repairman. Then we'll surround a couple of two-inch steaks."

The Shrimp's eyes were wide with wonder.

He Was White-Washed

A NUMBER of thefts had taken place in the post office at Lyons, France, and detectives were set to catch the thief. It was concluded that the thefts had taken place in the lavatory, so a watch on that room was kept through a peep-hole in the ceiling. Through it a detective saw a postman in uniform rifling letters, but could not see his face. Determined to mark him for identification, the detective stamped so vigorously upon the thin ceiling as to unsettle some of its whitewash, and a quantity of it was deposited on the left sleeve and shoulder of the culprit's coat. The stamping frightened the thief away, and before the detectives could get down to the mailing room, he had brushed his coat so carefully that when they did arrive, they were unable to distinguish his uniform from those of the other clerks. The aid of science was then invoked. The coats of several suspected clerks were submitted to Dr. Locard, of the Lyons Laboratory, for microscopic examination. On the left sleeve and shoulder of one of them he found a quantity of sulphate of lime (whitewash), which, though invisible to the naked eye, the brush had failed to remove.

—*J. L. Considine.*

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ILLUSTRATED
CRIMES
by STOOKIE ALLEN
THE "MILLION DOLLAR" SNATCH MOB
THREE YEARS AGO, WHEN THE KIDNAPING RACKET WAS AT ITS HEIGHT AND G-MEN WERE JUST STARTING TO OPERATE, THE POLICE OF DETROIT, MICHIGAN, CLEANED UP A SNATCH MOB WHOSE DARING PLOTS INCLUDED A SCHEME FOR KIDNAPING EDSEL FORD'S TWO CHILDREN FOR A MILLION DOLLAR RANSOM.
EDSEL Ford
THE GANG HAD TERRORIZED THE CITY FOR THREE YEARS. FEAR OF THE VICTIMS FOR THE LIVES OF THEIR KIN HAD MADE THEM DEAL WITH THE KIDNAPERS WITHOUT NOTIFYING THE POLICE. THE BREAK-UP OF THE BAND BEGAN WHEN POLICE GOT A TIP FROM AN INFORMER THAT THERE WAS TO BE A PAYOFF IN THE SNATCHING OF 20-YEAR OLD DANIEL CASS, SON OF A WEALTHY REALTOR.
HIDING IN THE SHRUBBERY NEAR A STREET CORNER, DETECTIVES CAUGHT THE GANG'S COLLECTOR RED-HANDED, BUT NOT WITHOUT AN EXCHANGE OF SHOTS. THE COLLECTOR WAS JOSEPH "LEGS" LAMAN, A TOUGH OF UNSAVORY REPUTATION. BADLY WOUNDED, HE WAS RUSHED TO A HOSPITAL. A BOOK IN HIS POCKET DISCLOSED THE HIDEOUT ADDRESS OF THE GANG. THE LATTER, AWARE OF LEGS' CAPTURE, CLEARED OUT JUST IN TIME TO ESCAPE SQUAD CARS SENT TO RAID THE PLACE. BUT AT ANOTHER ADDRESS THE POLICE HAD BETTER LUCK. THEY TOOK RAYMOND ANDREWS INTO CUSTODY WHEN A SEARCH REVEALED HANDCUFFS AND LEG IRONS IN AN UPSTAIRS ROOM THAT HAD BEEN USED TO IMPRISON SOMEONE.
"Legs"

COMING SOON—

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A FEW WEEKS LATER, A PASSERBY IN HANOVER STREET HEARD A WINDOW CRASH AND SAW A PAIR OF MANACLED ARMS PASS THROUGH THE BROKEN PANE OF AN APARTMENT WINDOW. HE REPORTED TO THE POLICE.
...THEY FOUND A YOUTH CHAINED TO A BED. STARVED AND PARCHED WITH THIRST, THE LAD HAD DRAGGED THE BED TO THE WINDOW. HE SAID HE WAS THE SON OF MATTHEW HOLDREITH, CHAIN RESTAURANT MAN, AND THAT HE HAD BEEN MADE CAPTIVE WHILE PUTTING HIS CAR IN THE FAMILY GARAGE. — THE BOY'S DISTRAUGHT FATHER HAD SECRETLY PAID $5,000 RANSOM, BUT HIS RELEASE HAD NOT BEEN EFFECTED BECAUSE THE KIDNAPERS HAD BEEN NABBED FOR THEFT OF A TAXICAB THE NIGHT THEY COLLECTED THE RANSOM.
A SQUAD CAR CREW HAD RECOGNIZED THE STOLEN CAR, GIVEN CHASE, AND CAPTURED TWO OF IT OCCUPANTS AFTER A BATTLE. THE TWO WERE EDWARD WILES AND FRANK HOHFER. A THIRD, WILLIE MURPHY, ESCAPED BUT DIED NEXT DAY OF WOUNDS. WILES, HOHFER AND LAMAN WOULDN'T ADMIT A THING. BUT ANDREWS SQUEALED BECAUSE HE FELT THAT THE GANG HADN'T TAKEN CARE OF HIS WIFE. YOUNG CASS, ACCORDING TO ANDREWS, HAD BEEN TAKEN TO A SWAMP THE NIGHT LAMAN WAS CAUGHT AND SHOT TO DEATH. JOSEPH "RED" O'RIORDAN, THE GANG'S LEADER, WAS TRACED TO LOS ANGELES AND ARRESTED.
"RED" O'RIORDAN
HE DYED HIS HAIR BLACK AND WORE CHEATERS, BUT HIS FINGERPRINTS BETRAYED HIM. HE GOT A LONG PRISON TERM, AS DID HIS PARTNERS IN CRIME.

THE CLUE OF THE FOLDED DOLLAR

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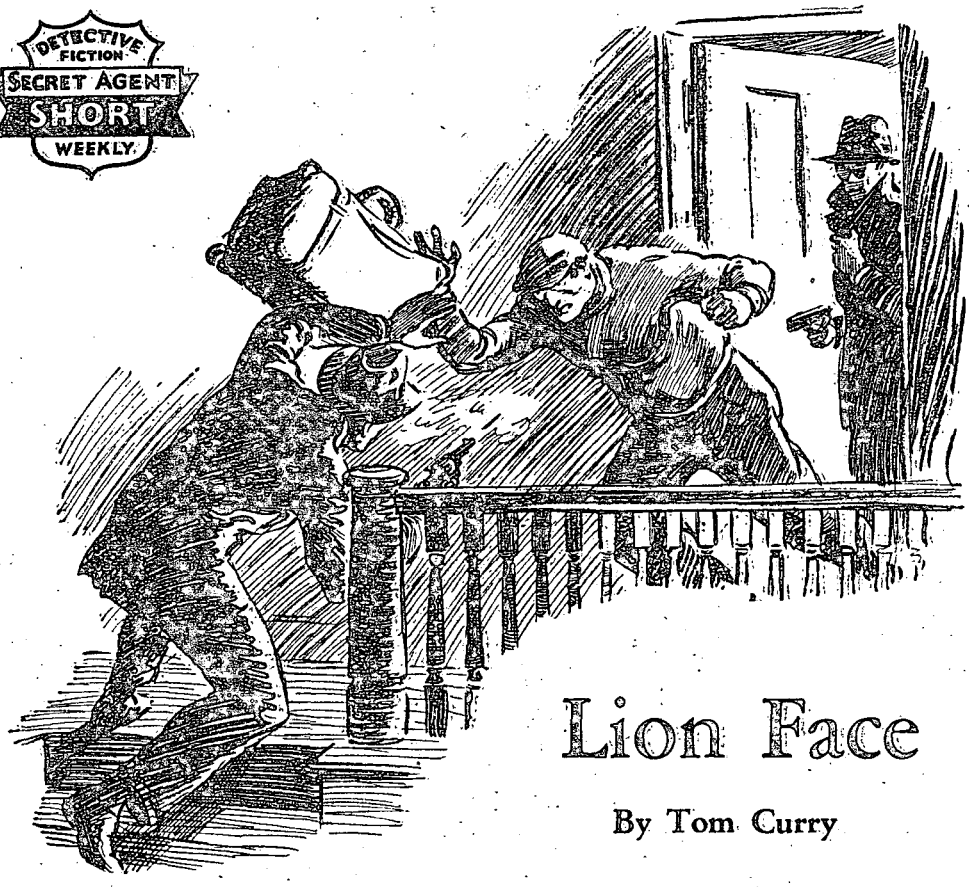
DETECTIVE FICTION
SECRET AGENT
SHORT
WEEKLY



But Pierre refused to surrender. He hurled the heavy suitcase at Devrite

Lion Face

By Tom Curry

Special Agent Devrite Knew Bernard Rich Had Two Great Secrets Locked in His Heart: Why He Feared for His Family, and Who Killed Lewis

SECRET Agent George Devrite sensed the chilling fear of Bernard Rich. The importer had a strong face with tiny lines around his tight lips Devrite thought came from suffering. Rich held himself in steel control but Devrite was as impressionable as a fine barometer.

Posing as a beaded-goods salesman, the undercover-man was showing his wares to the merchant — it was a murder mystery Devrite had been set to unravel by Inspector Hallihan.

"This is our best seller," announced Devrite as he feigned single-hearted devotion to the handmade pocketbook he held out, "and we can let you have it at a very low figure."

Rich took it and fixed his dark-lined eyes on the bag. He was a slim man in his middle thirties and was well stocked with suppressed nervous energy; he dressed well and his dark hair inclined to curl. The small office with frosted-glass door stenciled: RICH AND LEWIS:

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IMPORTERS was tastefully furnished—very much so, thought Devrite, save for the cheap new rug under his feet. That rug intrigued his detective's imagination.

On the desk was a photograph of a pretty woman holding a fair-haired girl of five on her lap, both smiling.

Devrite wondered why Rich was afraid. Had the importer killed his partner Lewis—whose body had been found up a dark alley stabbed to the heart? Was it exposure that caused Rich's hands to contract and open that way and his face muscles to set? Devrite looked once at the palms as Rich handed him back the pocketbook. There had been bits of white skin scraped off in the horny grooves of that knife handle. He could not tell from his brief glance whether Rich's hands were scarred. It would be difficult to say unless a glass was used to examine them. . . .

For the twentieth time, Rich looked at the picture. The impression he made on Devrite was excellent; the spy liked him. Rich was no physical coward. The agent decided it must be for his family that the importer feared. His devotion was obvious. Whenever his eyes rested on the image of his loved ones, they softened. Yet if Rich was guilty of murder he must pay. . . .

In his dangerous lone-wolf life, the secret policeman was always faced with personalities. From time to time he contacted a criminal with redeeming qualities—such as love for his family. If he could clear Rich, he would prefer that; he hoped to be able to report to Hallihan that Rich was innocent of Lewis's death. But—still his duty remained if Rich had killed.

Lewis had died three nights before. His pockets had been stripped and all identification destroyed so that had not the tabloids printed grisly pictures of his dead face, his boarding-house landlady might not have come forward to identify him for the police the following day.

"Pardon me a moment, sir," begged Rich—his speech was extremely courteous, the hint of an accent to his voice that Devrite thought might be French or Italian. The darkness of his skin bore it out. But when questioned by the authorities, Rich had given his birthplace as San Francisco, 1901. And as Hallihan dryly remarked when he dispatched his star spy on the trail, this was a favorite resort of a man with something to hide. All records had been destroyed in the great earthquake and fire of 1906. It was one of the determining factors which had caused the Department to investigate Rich further.

Rich had simply been interrogated as to his partner, since nothing had come out, such as talk of friction, to show Rich had any motive to murder Lewis. Rich said he believed the killing the work of bandits. He had been at home with his wife through the evening.

Yet Lewis had not been killed on the spot where they picked him up.

It was not an ordinary police case. The chief of the secret police, Inspector Hallihan, in his obscure office down the street from Headquarters, awaited Devrite's report. Outwardly an importer of beaded goods, Hallihan was the main conduit through which flowed the findings of such operatives as Devrite. The firm of Rich and Lewis handled all sorts of trinkets and a beaded-goods salesman made as good a pretext as any for Devrite to contact the man.

Rich had excused himself to use the phone. He had his number and asked

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anxiously, "Darling, are you all right? And Louise?" From the relaxation of his expression Devrite concluded all was well, and the agent felt something of the relief Rich showed.

Rich hung up. "I am sorree," he said softly, "but my family has not been well lately."

Devrite knew that was a lie. It so happened Hallihan had remarked that Mrs. Rich and the child were in good health—had they been ill it would have been reported so in the DD-4's of investigators.

"Won't you have dinner and take in a show with me tonight" asked Devrite in his salesman's rôle. The secret agent's broad-shouldered, slim-waisted figure was clad in a conventional blue business suit, soft white shirt and dark tie. He knew how to act, he was often called upon to simulate a rôle. Trained in ju-jutsu and all expert police methods, a high-caliber and competent detective who seldom made arrests and received no outward credit, Devrite was a leech when once on a criminal trail.

"I regret it very much," replied Rich, "but you know my partner was killed by bandits. I am not celebrating at present and usually spend the evening at home." He apologized twice.

DEVRITE did not press him. He knew the case might take time. Rich promised to see him again the following week and meanwhile to think about placing an order. Devrite pushed back his chair and managed to shove the new rug aside but the floor was stained dark mahogany and in a hurried glance he could not say whether there were spots—such as blood might make—on the wood. The door had a spring latch and he noted the make, as, with bag and hat in hand, he said *au revoir*.

The office building was an old one in the East Twenty's near Fifth Avenue. Devrite disposed of his suitcase and put on another coat and hat and a pair of shaded glasses. With his shoulders drooped, he was not easily recognizable as the alert young salesman.

At two P.M. Bernard Rich came out and went to his bank on the corner. Devrite managed to be close enough to see the teller count out a large sum of money which Rich put in his pocket. Rich returned to his office. At five Devrite saw him home to his Twelfth Street apartment where he lived with his wife and small daughter. The pretty woman greeted him at the outer door and the child frolicked about them. Rich caught the golden-haired girl in his arms.

Devrite faded away and went to supper. At around nine, he was at the six-story office building. A few yellow lights were visible in windows of late-working tenants but though the street door was unlocked the elevators were no longer running. There was a watchman around but he was easily eluded and Devrite climbed three flights to Rich's office.

It was the difference in grade and the newness of that 9 x 12 rug that brought Devrite back. It did not fit the other furnishings, which were mellowed and tasteful. This and the small lie Rich had told, the uncheckable birthplace, forced Devrite toward a distasteful conclusion: that Bernard Rich was not innocent. A rug makes a convenient wrapper for a body and catches blood. Lewis had not bled on the spot where he was found.

He had provided himself with keys he thought would open that standard lock. A bulb burned down the hall and reflected from the frosted surfaces in the doors. The secret agent glanced

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up and down to make sure he was unobserved and quickly tried a skeleton key in the lock—but the door was already open and after listening, he turned the knob and stepped in, shutting the door behind him.

He was greeted by that air of deserted calm distinctive to offices at night. His suspicions aroused by the unlocked door, he first carefully inspected the whole office, catfooting in the dark. Satisfied, he switched on his fountain-pen flashlight and knelt by the rug. A linen tag underneath gave the maker's name and also the store nearby where it had been bought. He rolled it back and put his light close to the floorboards, two inches wide and closely tongued together. Absorbed in this examination, he suddenly became aware that someone was outside in the hall.

At once he switched off his light, but realized with chagrin he was very late doing so. A large distorted shadow cast by the hall lamp lay on the door-glass rectangle. The knob clicked and the agent, trying to slide around behind the desk, glimpsed the grotesque figure framed in the opening. The man wore a dark coat that fitted his needle form like a glove, upturned collar hiding his cheeks. He had a fuzzy black fedora jammed to his eyes and from there, the rest of his face was shapeless—though there was high color to it. . . .

He spoke in French and his voice sent a shudder of repulsion through Devrite. The sound was a thick mouthing and slobbering as though he spoke with a mouthful of slimy soup. It was indistinct, yet Devrite understood, for the agent spoke French as well as several other tongues—part of his training and value.

"Well, put on the light again. What are you afraid of, Riche?"

Devrite had no gun. He made it a habit not to carry one since now and then he was picked up by regular detectives and could not afford exposure of any kind. Once fingered, his worth would be destroyed. He was excited and irritated at being trapped; he had had no idea anyone would come to the office but now realized he might have because of the unlocked door. Rich had evidently expected this man and the latter to find the merchant awaiting him—another point against the importer.

Devrite had to answer and did so in French: "M'sieu Riche is not yet here but will come soon."

The other gasped. A match was struck and its yellow flare showed the strange, frozen face of the Frenchman. "Who are you?" he snarled.

"A friend of Riche," replied Devrite—he had no fear of the other but felt instinctive repulsion. . . .

"A friend?" mouthed the man in that awful voice. He cursed in gutter French.

The match burned down. It flickered out and on the secret agent's brain was left the impression of that bizarre face with the slits that were eyes. . . .

"A flesh mask," he told himself.

He took a step forward as the needle-like figure sidled toward the door and called, "Pierre!"

"*Oui,* Rabat, yes," growled a heavy voice.

It was a shock to the secret agent to see the sudden change in the situation. The man who slouched in was huge. He had a dark, ugly face with a long nose and jutting chin; he weighed at least two-fifty, the burly form, in turtleneck sweater and sailor pants, was obviously of great power. As far as was visible under the greasy black cap, his head was altogether bald and

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his pig eyes blinked at the dim figures of his friend and the secret policeman. He practically filled the entry.

II

MENTALLY Devrite girded himself for battle. The thin Rabat was obviously the boss and Rabat did not like Devrite's unexpected presence. A jungle panther could not have been more difficult to woo and the agent felt he was dealing with just such a personality, cunning and dangerous, apt to strike without warning. . . . Through his mind flashed the train of happenings: Rich drew a large sum of money. Had an evident appointment with these men. Probably to pay the money to them. They were French criminals and had perhaps killed Lewis at Rich's order and were coming to collect for it.

The huge Pierre suddenly gave a low hiss and stepped inside. "Policeman?"

"A trap!" muttered Rabat.

Devrite leaped. The knife thrown at him missed by inches and clattered on the wall. Pierre crouched and flung himself out, great hands seizing the uniformed watchman who had evidently glimpsed them as they sneaked in and followed them up. The watchman cried, "Hey, you, what're you doin'?" but the big man had him then.

The speed with which Pierre disposed of the watchman—who was not a small person — showed his immense strength. Before Devrite could cover the few intervening yards the giant smashed down the watchman's guard, lifted him off the tiled hall floor and flung him bodily against the wall. A sharp cry was cut off short in the muffled thud as his head struck a panel and the watchman slumped unconscious on the tiles.

The violent action excited Devrite; he could not afford such encounters. A door opened down the hall and a late-working tenant looked out and saw the prostrate watchman and Pierre as he turned on Devrite. The slender Rabat, who had thrown the stiletto, stuck out a foot and Devrite tripped headlong over it, coming up against Pierre's belly. He drove in with his fists in an effort to knock out the giant's wind as he felt the terrific strength of the arms that locked around him.

Dimly he heard the man down the hall shouting for help. But he himself was fighting for his life, could feel the heat of Pierre's body as his head snapped back in agony at the pressure on his ribs.

"Hurry, Pierre — outside — escape, kill him—" gasped the masked Rabat and ran in a shuffling fashion for the stairs.

Devrite felt that no ju-jutsu trick could save him; his attempt to save the watchman had ruined him. No hold would now be effective against Pierre, since Devrite was in that bear hug with his lungs crying for air. Yet he had in his hand a small flashlight and enough power to ram its metal end into Pierre's back ribs. He could scarcely find enough breath to gasp, "I'll—shoot—"

That, and a second call from Rabat at the stairs, caused Pierre to lose his hold for a moment. It gave Devrite the inches needed to suck in precious wind. Pierre thought he had a gun—he snarled as he whirled Devrite around. The agent rammed his nails into the giant's eyes and Pierre flung him away with a hoarse Apache oath. Devrite sailed through the air and hit the wall a glancing blow that numbed his entire left side. He lay on his back for moments unable to move. . . .

Pierre put down his ugly head and

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raced for the stairs. The man in the street office was yelling at the top of his voice. Devrite could not afford to be taken captive there by police. Mouth wide, side shooting needles of pain through his system, he managed to get to his knees. Hand on the wall, he rose and staggered for the exit.

Rabat and Pierre were already at the floor below. He could look through the stair well and see them running down. It was sheer nerve that forced Devrite on—and through ears booming with rushing blood, the secret agent suddenly heard Rich cry out. Rich was coming up.

"Wait—what's wrong, Rabat?" he shrieked.

The masked man hit Rich, knocked him back down the stairs. "You'll die for this," he screamed in French. "But first your child—you will pay for cheating me, trying to trap us—wait till the police know exactly what you have done—"

Pierre was up. He kicked Rich and the merchant rolled over and over. Then the two jumped past the dazed man as he brought up against the rail, hands clutching the bars.

Rich rose, tried to follow them as Devrite reached the second landing. The importer gasped, "Stop — please wait, Rabat — I have it — your money—" He was so excited he failed completely to see and hear the oncoming agent.

Pierre and Rabat, at the street entrance, turned west and loped away around the corner. A motor reared and a black sedan made a screeching U-turn. Devrite paused at the turn as Rich ran ahead. He could read the license numbers and memorized them to check later. Rich pelted futilely after the swift car, waving his arms. From the other direction, a patrolman came toward the building. The man in the window was still yelling. . . .

DEVRITE stepped back into a shadowed doorway. Rich was sobbing and cursing, but he, too, saw the uniformed officer and quickly drew off, hurrying downtown.

Devrite took quick stock of his injuries. His ribs ached as though smashed. Every time he took a breath it sent a shooting pain through his side. He limped away as the patrolman ran into the building.

He was very angry. He thought Rich was hooked to these evident criminals come to collect from him. First he went to his furnished room in the Forty's where he took off his clothes and looked over his hurts. The skin over his ribs was black and swollen. He bathed it and painted it with iodine. After a cigaret he felt a little better and his brain began clicking with its customary thoroughness.

The masked man Rich and Pierre had addressed as Rabat had threatened dire revenge. Pierre was obviously a strong-arm henchman. Devrite wanted both. He had not yet cleared the case and required complete evidence to hand Hallihan. Rich should lead him again to these killers—he concluded they had done away with Lewis.

He was still overwrought from the sharp fight. He would not allow Pierre to get those hands on him again. . . .

Inspector Hallihan was in his second-floor office. "What hit you, a stream-lined train" he asked his battered agent.

Devrite sat down. "I want a gun."

Hallihan slid open a desk drawer and silently passed him a short-nosed S. & W. revolver of a type favored by detectives. It was a convenient pocket size, yet large enough to stop a man.

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Devrite broke it, inspected the loaded chambers before dropping it into his right-hand coat pocket.

He opened his lips but something kept him from telling Hallihan his findings. He analyzed his indecision as he blew out a cloud of smoke from his cigarette and decided it came from an unwillingness to pin Bernard Rich. He told himself sternly it was simple sentiment because he kept thinking of what arrest would mean to Rich's wife and child.

"Have you anything on Rich?" asked Hallihan from one corner of his tight mouth as he clipped a fresh cigar in the other.

"Nothing certain." Devrite knew he was taking a chance. If anything went wrong, Hallihan would not realize what had happened. "I ran into a couple of lush workers who tried to rob me."

Hallihan did not press him; the secret agent was allowed much more latitude than men on the regular force. Hallihan knew Devrite's competence and good judgment.

"Will you please check this license number?" asked Devrite, giving the one of the car in which Rabat had nimbly escaped.

Hallihan lifted a direct phone to Headquarters. In a minute he reported, "Stolen plates."

"I thought so." He rose. "I'll call in when I can."

The inspector looked at his nails; his job was a wearing one as chief of the secret police. Devrite took his leave.

He had to sleep. His body ached and his brain was tired from turning over one conjecture after another concerning Rich.

Up early, he went to the store near Rich's office where the rug had been purchased. He found it had been sent over on order the morning after Lewis' murder.

There were detectives in the office building. Devrite learned the watchman had been seriously injured, a shoulder broken and a brain concussion. He knew he was fortunate not to have suffered worse than he had. The attack had been laid to thieves and Bernard Rich had not been implicated in the matter.

It was evident to Devrite, who saw Rich several times during the day, that the man was overwrought. There were deep lines under his eyes and he was pale. He was too nervous to sit still and kept stepping into the hall down which Devrite waited. Whenever his phone rang, he would dash back to reply. Devrite decided he was hoping for a call from Rabat.

Around noon Rich made a phone call to a French newspaper. Lounging in the hall Devrite heard him give a personal ad to be inserted: "R. Please call me. It was not my fault."

He concluded that Rich did not know where to find Rabat and Pierre.

Rich went home early, around three P.M. Devrite trailed at a distance. He wished to trap Pierre and Rabat. Rich's burning eyes were on the home where his loved ones were.

Devrite paused at the corner to watch Rich go up the short marble steps —the apartment was on the first floor. The spy's observant eyes rested on the license plates of the closed sedan parked up the block. He tensed. It was the car in which Rabat and Pierre had driven off. He looked quickly around but did not see them. Rich went into the house.

There was a small cigar store at the corner and Devrite stepped inside and bought a pack of cigarettes. From the window, he could observe the car and

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also see the cabs at the avenue station. He idled, smoking, for a short time until Pierre came quickly across the street from the sedan. He carried a rolled-up Persian rug in his arms. His warped features looked even more villainous in daylight than at night. He stuffed the rug in the rear and pushing his bulk behind the wheel, drove off.

III

DEVRITE hurried out to a cab. As the driver spurted after the sedan, he heard a hoarse cry and looking down the side street saw Rich, hatless and waving his arms, running up the block.

After turning several corners, Pierre drove swiftly westward and stopped the car near Eleventh Avenue. He went through a narrow archway that led behind an old tenement, cobwebbed and dingy, no longer in use.

Devrite paid off his taxi and hurried to the sedan. He reached in and seized the rolled rug, an expensive affair heavy of nap—the sort and size which would fit Bernard Rich's office floor. There was something in the rug and his blood chilled as he realized it was a small child—the little girl with fair hair, Rich's daughter. Her eyes were shut with long lashes drooped on pale cheeks. For a moment he thought she was dead, then he smelled the sickening odor of chloroform. She was breathing.

He took her from the cocoon. She might smother, and her life came first of all. He inwardly cursed Rabat and Pierre. He would have them for this if for nothing else. . . . Busy as he was with the child, he noted the dark, dry stain in the rug's weave as he rolled it again.

The girl in his arms, he went to the corner. Cars slid by on the arteries and people passed but they thought him a father with a sleeping baby. She began breathing more heavily as fresh air from the river breeze struck her face. She gasped, cried a little and he felt a wave of relief. He soothed her and she stared at him with large brown eyes. "Would you like some ice cream?" he asked gently.

It distracted her. Her eyes opened wider. Down the littered avenue was a small candy and ice-cream store and the agent took her in. An old woman in charge cast a kindly look at the child and he asked, "Will you watch my little girl till I get back? She can have plain ice cream." He left a dollar on the counter.

Hurrying out, he saw Pierre come forth and glance at the rug which Devrite had left rolled. The big man went to a phone booth in a drug store but Devrite could not get close enough to overhear him. He kept his hand on the .38 as the huge Frenchman came out and lounged on the corner. Ten minutes later, a cab drew up with a screech of brakes and Bernard Rich jumped from it and ran frantically toward Pierre.

Pierre's thick lips formed the word, "*Allons*—let's go." He looked about to make sure no police were with Rich.

Pierre led Rich to the alley. Devrite was sure they were going to Rabat. He would check this for sure and then call Hallihan. These killers must be stopped at once and he could not expose himself to do it. He slid along between the buildings. Behind the deserted tenement facing the street was built a second dingy house as is often the case in the slums, separated by a narrow court from the front. It was about as dilapidated as the outer building.

Gun in hand, Devrite entered, heard

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heavy steps overhead. He tiptoed up a flight just in time to see a rear door shut. The building was dank, smelled musty and rotten, was poorly lit. He put an ear to the door. Rich was crying agonizedly, "Rabat, give her back. Here is the money. I had nothing to do with that yesterday."

And Rabat's strange mouthing: "You will pay. Get me twenty thousand dollars by midnight—or your daughter dies."

Rich answered, "Rabat, this money represents all my savings. I can raise very little more but I will give you everything."

"Twenty thousand or you never see her again. You don't dare tell the police. Anyway, we're leaving here now and Pierre will get in touch so you can pay up."

"Where is she"

"You'll never know unless you pay."

Devrite went up a few steps of the ascending flight as Rich promised, "I'll get all I can."

Rich hurried out. A red-tinged glow came from the dingy apartment. The hall was dark even in the day. Pierre saw him downstairs and quickly returned. Rabat's strange voice reached Devrite: "Hurry, Pierre, we must leave in case that fool squeals. Hide somewhere else. . . ."

Devrite was determined now to take them. He had not time to call for an arresting squad but perhaps the undercover chief could send regular police in afterwards. He dared not let these two dangerous creatures run loose any longer; besides they would take alarm when they found the child gone. He pulled his coat collar around his cheeks, and hat down over his eyes. Gun up, he slid toward the door.

It was half open and he looked into the front room. The windows were heavily shaded with hung blankets. A foul odor came out. Pierre started forth, carrying a battered suitcase. Devrite cocked his pistol and snapped in French, "Throw up your hands!"

But Pierre refused to surrender without a fight. He hurled the bag at Devrite, who sidestepped but was knocked off balance as the heavy suitcase struck his shoulder. Pierre never hesitated, but lunged immediately at him. Devrite fired. The slug struck the giant in the thigh, failed to halt him. In the doorway showed the strange, stiff face of Rabat, who had an automatic in his clawed hand. . . .

Pierre was cursing and his hand clutched at Devrite's gun. Devrite pulled his trigger again, lip bitten between his teeth. The aim was point-blank and the .38 bullet hit Pierre in the breastbone—shattered it. The rush of his heavy body knocked Devrite backward against the teetering rail, which gave way just as Rabat raised his automatic and fired. Devrite felt the sting of the bullet tearing through the flesh of his left arm. He crashed into the stair well and landed on his spine. Rabat peered over, his pistol ready, and Devrite snapped a shot at him.

UP on one hand and his knees, now he heard Rabat give a squeal of pain. Devrite, fighting fury in his heart, brain red with rage, clambered up the stairs and ran toward the door. Rabat had retreated inside. Devrite heard him mewing, spitting curses. . . .

The secret agent leaped through the doorway. Rabat shot once at him and the slug whirled close to his hurtling body as he lunged into the den. The red-tinged light showed Rabat plainly, and Devrite sent two bullets at him.

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The automatic flew from Rabat's shaking hand.

As the skeleton man stooped to regain his weapon, Devrite leaped over, struck his masked face with his sharp revolver barrel. Rabat gave a shriek of mad anguish as the mask was torn off, exposing the awful countenance underneath.

Devrite recoiled in horror. The glaring eyes were sunk deep in the skull. The whole face was bloated and the thickened skin gave the leonine aspect —the *lion face!*

"Leper!" shrieked Devrite, his flesh crawling. The Frenchman was in an advanced stage of leprosy.

Taking advantage of Devrite's stunned surprise, Rabat crawled into the dark bedroom, where the single window was curtained with a thick blanket. Devrite stepped toward it. "Come out!" he growled. He had to go in there—yet how could he touch that horror—?

A shot answered him. But the bullet did not come near him. His hand shook as he struck a match. Rabat lay, thank heaven, face down. He had put his final bullet through his own mad brain.

The secret agent staggered out, blood running down his left arm. He leaned on the dirty banister as he went downstairs and, on the pavement again sucked in deep draughts. The sunlight blinded him for moments as he found his shaky way along the street.

He was still tremulous as he walked into the store where he had left the child. He washed in the back room, gave the old woman a ten-dollar bill that kept her from being inquisitive. The little girl, with the resilience of youth, was playing around the store with a toy car the old woman had given her. She went willingly with Devrite when he bundled her into a cab to take her home.

Rich was out when they arrived. The frantic mother wept with joy as Devrite delivered the child. She phoned Rich, at his office. He had gone there to raise the last of ransom money.

An hour later, Bernard Rich was closeted with Devrite.

"You remember I was at your office and saw your little's girl's picture?" the agent said. "I have been staying in the neighborhood and recognized you one time with your wife and child, also. I saw a man come from a side way carrying your baby and it made me suspicious so I managed to follow him, rescue her and bring her back."

Rich stared at him with intense gratitude. "Anything I have is yours! Money. . . ."

"Forget it. Maybe you'll give me an order." He smiled. "I'll report this to the police—"

Rich clutched his arm. "Please don't."

"But both these rascals are dead, I tell you. I had to use my gun on the big one in self-defense and the thin one shot himself. I'll be in a terrible fix if the police catch me."

"I must throw myself on your mercy," Rich said frantically. "I am a fugitive from Devil's Isle, the French Penal colony in South America. As a youth I enlisted in the African Legion and as the life was cruel and boring I ran away. Finally they sent me to Guiana, where I met Rabat and Pierre, and Lewis, whose real name was Jean Louis. Rabat contracted leprosy in Guiana, it is very prevalent there in the filth and misery. Lewis and I were friends and we escaped and came to New York where we managed to rehabilitate ourselves.

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"About a week ago, Rabat and Pierre chanced to meet Lewis. They forced him to give them money under threat of exposure. At our office the other night, Rabat, who was half mad from disease, lost patience and stabbed him to death. They wrapped him in my rug and took him out and dumped the body. Pierre phoned me early in the morning and told me I'd better lay another rug. I dared not inform the police. It meant return to a living hell, ruin for my family. Those two ordered me to get them more and more money. There was trouble. They thought I had cheated them and Pierre stole my baby from the yard this afternoon. They said they would kill her if I did not raise an impossible sum. Their death relieves me of a terrible weight—yet, if you tell the police, all of this will still mean ruin for my family and myself." The sweat rolled down Rich's face, anguish twisting it.

Devrite gripped the arms of his chair. He was sure Rich was telling the truth. There was no threat in Rich's voice, simply an appeal for life. . . . Rich's years since his escape had shown he was not a criminal

After leaving Rich, Devrite phoned Hallihan:

"The murderers of Lewis were two French fugitives from Devil's Isle. They caught him in the street, stabbed and robbed him. The one who used the knife was a leper and bits of flesh sloughed off on the rough handle of the dagger." He gave the tenement-house address. "I had to shoot the big one in self-defense; the lion face turned his gun on himself when he was trapped."

"And Rich?" asked the inspector.

DEVRITE hesitated. He had reassured Rich. After taking an order or two from the merchant to prevent him from suspecting his true status, he would drop out of Rich's life. There was more, he reflected, to police work than mere detection and arrest.

"Rich," he answered deliberately, "is quite clear, Inspector. . . . I have nothing to report against him."

He hung up with a shrug and went back to his lonely room.

Cipher Solvers' Club for June

(*Continued from Page* 30)

Four—Anne Blumner, Atlantic City, N. J.; E. Caldicott, New York, N. Y.; Q. E. D., Miami, Fla.; Robert Krantzler, Beaverdale, Pa.; W. J. Lanahan, Miami, Fla.; Felix Marin, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Gene Miller, Petersburg, Ind.; John M. Seals, Paterson, N. J.; Us, Chicago, Ill.

Three—Fred Holmes, Bridgeport, Conn.; L. R. Klein, New Orleans, La.; David Martin Lieberman, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Medico, South Orange, N. J.

Two—Dorothy M. Parnell, Chicago, Ill.; Harry Snow, Phoenix, Ariz.

One—Mrs. George Currie, Gulfport, Miss.; E. Sthar Odilnu, Atchison, Kans.

Unsigned—Six Answers, from Chicago, Ill.; Six Answers, No Address; Five Answers, No Address.

Corrections—*Mrs. Anna M. Page, Shelburne Falls, Mass., 24 Answers instead of 23 for April; Bill Clark, Bismarck, N. Dak., 21 Answers instead of 22 for April, also 18 instead of 16 for December, 1935; Mrs. Josephine Johnson, Pittsburg, Kans., 20 Answers instead of 15 for April; John T. Straiger, Brooklyn, N. Y., 12 Answers instead of 11 for April; Elvin Crane Paynter, Ocean City, N. J., 17 Answers for May not previously credited; How Carso, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, 24 Answers instead of 18 for March; Chas. R. Wagner, Los Angeles, Calif., 5 Answers for March, not previously credited.

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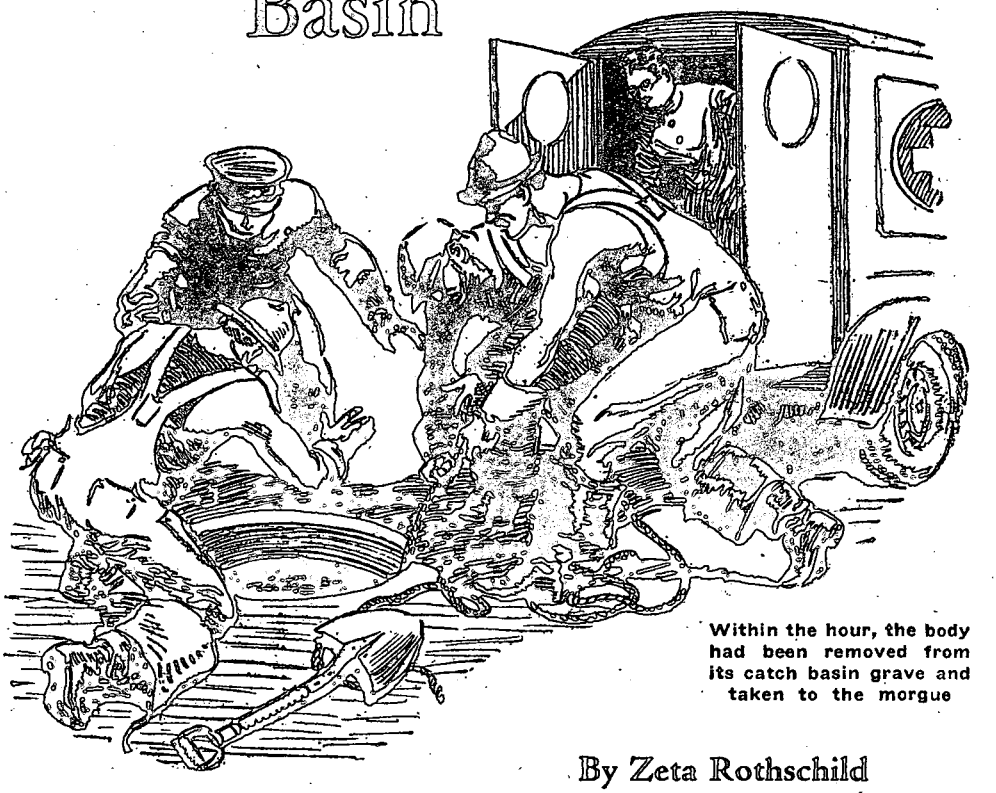
The Clue in the Catch Basin



Within the hour, the body had been removed from its catch basin grave and taken to the morgue

By Zeta Rothschild

TRUE SHORT DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

Relief Crew Members First Saw It, and Drew Back, Mute, Horrified. Then Detectives Went to Work to Discover the Rest of a Strange Story

BECAUSE of the abundance of more or less willing hands available, the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission decided to do some intensive cleaning for the City of Chicago.

One of the projects which met with hearty approval of the authorities was the overhauling of the city sewers. And on the morning of the 18th of July, 1935, a group of men arrived at the corner of 68th Street and Fairfield Avenue with instructions to give the catch-basin there a going-over.

The men moved slowly. The day was hot, the sun climbing higher. Why hurry with the whole day, the week before them, a pay check inevitable? But now, when the most active members of the

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group had actually advanced upon the sewer and were ready to fall to work, they fell back in dismay.

For caught in the basin, half-submerged in the water was the body of a young girl!

"Young" they thought she must be, because of the slimness of her form. But since her head had been under water, it had long since lost resemblance to anything human. If she were to be identified, it would not be by her features. Officer Joseph Leonard, summoned to the scene, took charge immediately. Within the hour, the body had been taken to the morgue.

Dr. Jerry Kearns of the coroner's office, after examining the body, could give but little information to the detectives anxiously waiting for something to get their teeth into.

"Sorry," he finally admitted, "can't even tell you of what the girl died. The body's too far gone for that."

That the girl had met a violent death was taken for granted. But how, when and where, were all questions for which there was as yet no answer. Death had occurred, said Dr. Kearns, at least six months earlier.

However, fortunately, part of the body had escaped the filth of the sewer. Sections of a coat, a heavy coat at that, were still intact. And from a pocket a small notebook was recovered.

The advertisement that gave the original source of the book did not interest the Chicago police. The names and addresses, written on the pages in different handwriting, all had promise.

One name, the only feminine one pencilled in this notebook, was that of "Lorraine Nicodemus," in a small, clear script. Under it was an address, 6412 South Oakley Avenue.

Had a young woman by the name of Nicodemus been reported missing? The Missing Persons Bureau, quickly telephoned to, said no.

This information seemed discouraging. But a visit to the Nicodemus home nevertheless had every prospect of some results.

Miss Nicodemus, a pretty young girl, looked thoughtfully at the notebook handed her. Nothing was said to her of how the notebook had come into the possession of the police. She was merely asked to look at the book and tell them whether it was hers.

"It isn't mine," she answered promptly. "Though that's my name in my own handwriting."

Miss Nicodemus now gave some time to considering the problem. "My father," she explained, "brought me a half dozen or more of these notebooks and I gave most of them away. It's difficult for me to say just to whom I gave this one."

What was the date, the young woman was asked, when she had distributed these books?

"Around Thanksgiving," she answered. "Somewhere in the end of the month."

Could she recall to whom she had given these notebooks?

The young woman after a little thought answered by naming several friends.

"Wait a minute," interrupted Sergeant Francis McGurk, "did you say you gave one to Marion Cozzo?"

Miss Nicodemus nodded. "She was a very good friend of mine," she answered. "And the more I think of it, I'm pretty sure it was her book in which I wrote my name."

THIS Marion Cozzo, Sergeant McGurk recalled, had been reported missing by her parents the first week in December. Despite the best

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efforts of the Chicago police and the appeals of the girl's parents, no trace or word from the missing girl had ever come during the seven months that had passed since her disappearance.

The names of others, the young men, casually listed in the dead girl's notebook were now called off to Lorraine Nicodemus. Did she recognize any of them? Were they boy friends of Marion Cozzo?

Puzzled by the line of this questioning, Miss Nicodemus frowned. "Perhaps," she answered. "A couple of them I know. But one or two of the men I never heard of."

The disappearance of the Cozzo girl had been one of Chicago's most puzzling mysteries. She had left her home the night of December first, telling her mother she was going to an aunt, a Mrs. Del Priore, who lived at 72nd and Hermitage Avenue. She and a cousin were going to a party.

When Marion did not return home the night of the first, her parents took for granted that she had spent the night with her cousin. But when on the second, Marion had not returned, her twin brother, Lawrence, had been sent posthaste to inquire about Marion.

To the amazement of both families, it came out that Marion had not only never arrived at her aunt's house, but that she had never had a date with her cousin to go to a party!

The whole story had been spun out of whole cloth—that is, the young girl had made it up in order probably to keep a date with some young man she thought her family would disapprove of.

This theory had been backed somewhat by a roomer in the Cozzo home, Stephen Roach, who had told detectives then that the parents had been rather strict and insisted on knowing where and with whom their daughters spent their evening leisure.

What had happened to the girl had been a mystery. White Slavers? Perhaps. But though many friends and acquaintances of Marion Cozzo had been questioned, the results had been nil. Not until the body in the catch-basin had been brought to the morgue had the police had the slightest clue to the whereabouts of the missing girl.

Within twenty-four hours the corpse from the sewer had been identified. It was that of Marion Cozzo of 6420 Oakley Avenue.

And now with this point definitely established, the Chicago police felt they had something to go on. With whom, they now wanted to know, had Marion Cozzo spent that last night?

As a matter of course, the young men listed in the notebook found on the dead girl's body were looked up. One, Frank Halper, twenty years old, of 611 West 57th Street, was brought in for questioning.

"I knew Marion Cozzo all right," he admitted frankly, "but I had nothing to do with her disappearance."

The young man's forthrightness plus the excellent reputation he bore prevented any suspicion resting on him. And within a short time he was released.

Another name listed was that of Mills Redmond of 6446 South Irving Avenue, who worked as a sealer at the American Can Company.

"I met Marion through her brother Charles," he told the police. "But I didn't see her that night in December; in fact, I never made a date with her in my life."

Local gossip, however, contradicted this statement. Marion Cozzo had spoken of a new beau the week before her disappearance and had referred to

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him as Mickey. This, Captain Michael Lee of the Chicago Lawn Police Station learned, was Mills Redmond's nickname.

Redmond, the police learned, had not been working the week of the first of December according to the factory records.

"I wasn't in Chicago," Redmond now protested. "I went to Niles, Michigan, early that morning to see my wife."

Then followed, on request, an account of a vague visit to the Michigan city. "I didn't get to see my wife," he admitted, "but I can tell you of others I saw and the places I went."

It might be worth while to go into this alibi, Captain Lee decided. And Sergeant Francis McGurk was commissioned to make the trip to Niles while Mills Redmond was held.

A few reluctant witnesses had in the meantime come forward and claimed they had seen Redmond with a young girl answering Marion Cozzo's description in the vicinity of Marquette Park, not far from where the corpse of the missing girl was finally found.

But such an effort to identify the young girl's companion seven and a half months later would not have much weight with a jury, decided Assistant State's Attorney Irwin Clorfene. Much more impressive evidence—or a confession—would be necessary.

II

AND yet Redmond, shifty in his evasiveness, seemed the most likely suspect. And, in addition, that additional sense that becomes part of the power of the detective had sent a subconscious message to Redmond's questioners that here was a man whose movements and denials justified their most intensive investigation.

The report of Sergeant McGurk, who had by now returned from Niles, was perplexing. "I can't find any one who saw him in Niles on or around the first of December," he related. "But, on the other hand, a couple of people I went to see, those whose names Redmond gave me, said though they hadn't seen him then, said they had heard he was in town."

It would be extremely difficult, it was decided, to either affirm or deny Redmond's presence in Niles and his absence from Chicago on the all-important first of December.

However, it was up to the State to prove his presence in Chicago—that his alibi was false. Otherwise the young man's contention would stand.

"What about the lie-detector up at Northwestern University?"

It seemed a last resort. Undoubtedly it would prove, to the satisfaction of the authorities, at least, whether or not Redmond was lying. But whether or no he could be induced to confess was a question.

Anyway the experiment was worth trying.

Redmond approached casually, was canny enough to see that a refusal to join in the experiment would reflect on him. Assured that if he were innocent the lie-detector would back him up, he shrugged his shoulders and agreed to coöperate. His very willingness did much to disarm suspicion and cause the official hunch to lose a little of its firmness.

At the door of the laboratory, Mr. Fred Imbau welcomed Redmond and his escort. Redmond, a little nervous, took in a quick glance of the room. He saw little out of the ordinary. A couple of chairs, the kind popular for office use, stood close to a good sturdy table on which reposed a wooden box.

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When Redmond had been seated in one of the chairs, Mr. Imbau opened the box and threw back the lid. "It doesn't look very formidable," he commented. "And our test won't be any more upsetting."

After Redmond had removed his coat, an inflated "cuff"—something like the arrangement applied by a physician when he makes ready to take the blood pressure of a patient—was wrapped around the young man's arm.

Redmond eyed it with curiosity. "What happens now?" he asked.

"Just watch," he was told.

Glancing over his shoulder, for now his chair had been turned so that his back was to the apparatus, he could see them connecting the tube-like cuff on his arm with the complicated, at least to him, mechanism of the box. On the paper that was to unwind from the roller at one end, would be recorded, he was told, his reactions to the questions about to be put to him.

Before the test began, Mr. Imbau made a record of Redmond's normal blood pressure, his normal heart condition, and the usual fluctuation and variation of both. Only by noting the deviation from normal would the lie-detector be able to show up the instances when, aroused and made fearful by some pointed question, Redmond's blood pressure would mount, his heart would thump a little faster and his breathing, despite his efforts to control it, would become more rapid and distraught.

These preliminary tests over, Mr. Imbau and Redmond settled themselves comfortably in facing chairs and the questioning began.

Quietly the young man answered the first dozen or more questions. The pen on the polygraph was drawing a steady line on the unwinding reel of paper. Then came, casually enough spoken, a reference to the sewer at 58th Street and Fairfield Avenue.

Redmond's voice was as calm and even as before. But the polygraph record was showing a violent leap.

Came a number of questions pertaining to matters with no connection with the murder of Marion Cozzo and Redmond's pulse went back to normal immediately.

"The friends you said you were with in Niles say they never saw you there. How is that?" was another disturbing question.

Redmond gave a slight shrug. "They've got poor memories," he replied casually enough.

But the recording pen had given an upward jerk that produced a small alp on the white paper.

THE test took less than fifteen minutes. Time was allowed after every question that had made Redmond's pulse jerk or his blood pressure mount for both to come back to normal. But every time a question linked with the murder of Marion Cozzo was put to him, the same nervous, emotional upheaval took place.

And the picture portrayed by the pen of the polygraph cannot be denied.

The record removed from the instrument, Redmond was told he could put on his coat. Mr. Imbau studied the reel of paper.

"Look at his blood pressure," he commented to an associate, "it seemed mounted at every critical question. Every time I mentioned any detail in connection with Marion Cozzo's death, it went up."

The curve had continued to rise throughout the demonstration. Redmond, despite an outer calm, had admitted via the polygraph his tie-up with

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the death of the seventeen-year-old girl.

Mr. Imbau now brought the record to Redmond. "See these upward jerks?" And he pointed them out to the young man. "They tell us every time you lied. When you told the truth, the indicator stayed at normal."

One by one Redmond listened to the "lies" he had told. Why? To avoid suspicion. But this very caution had been exposed by the polygraph.

It took some time to make Redmond understand. Stubbornly he denied the story told by the polygraph. But the facts were there—the facts denied by him in person but supported by his heart beats.

At last Redmond sighed deeply. "I can't keep it up," he muttered. "You know it all. You're right; I didn't mean to. But I guess I killed her."

Then followed the sordid story of a sudden emotional brain-storm tragedy with the familiar fatal climax.

Marion, whose parents were very strict about her boy friends, had made the date with him nevertheless. They had wandered around Marquette Park and finally found a secluded nook.

Redmond had taken for granted that Marion would welcome the usual petting advances appropriate to such an occasion. But Marion Cozzo had shrunk away from him. Finally she had repulsed him vigorously.

The young man's ardor had veered suddenly into a violent resentment. She would try to put something over on him, would she? He became more demanding. Marion had started to scream and Redmond had immediately taken her by the throat.

When she became limp, he had let go. A little frightened, he had waited for her to come to. But her head hung back over the bench, her arms had relaxed. She did not answer or respond in any way when he shook her gently.

Then suddenly he had realized she was dead.

To get rid of the body was his next thought. And he recalled the sewer opening a short distance away. Looking cautiously around to make sure no others had chosen the bleak park for a rendezvous, he picked up the body, made his way to the sewer opening, and thrust it in. He watched it disappear into the maw of the sewer.

And then after pulling his hat down firmly on his head, he had gone home.

"Never thought the body would turn up?" Redmond was asked.

"I didn't know anything about catch-basins," he answered frankly.

The second week in October, 1935, Mills Redmond went on trial for the murder of Marion Cozzo before Judge John C. Lewe in the Criminal Court. His attorneys, Jeremiah Sullivan and Curry J. Martin, fought against the admission of the confession.

III

BUT after Mr. Imbau had explained how he obtained the confession, the defense's argument that it had been obtained under duress failed. The lie-detector—the polygraph—had convinced Redmond of the futility of denying his guilt. His confession had automatically followed.

Little deliberation was necessary. His jury found Mills Redmond guilty and fixed his prison term at forty years.

And Mills Redmond, a little more aware of the working of catch-basins and the possibilities behind the innocent looking polygraph, was led out of court to face a life with sufficient leisure for him to delve into the intricacies of both subjects.

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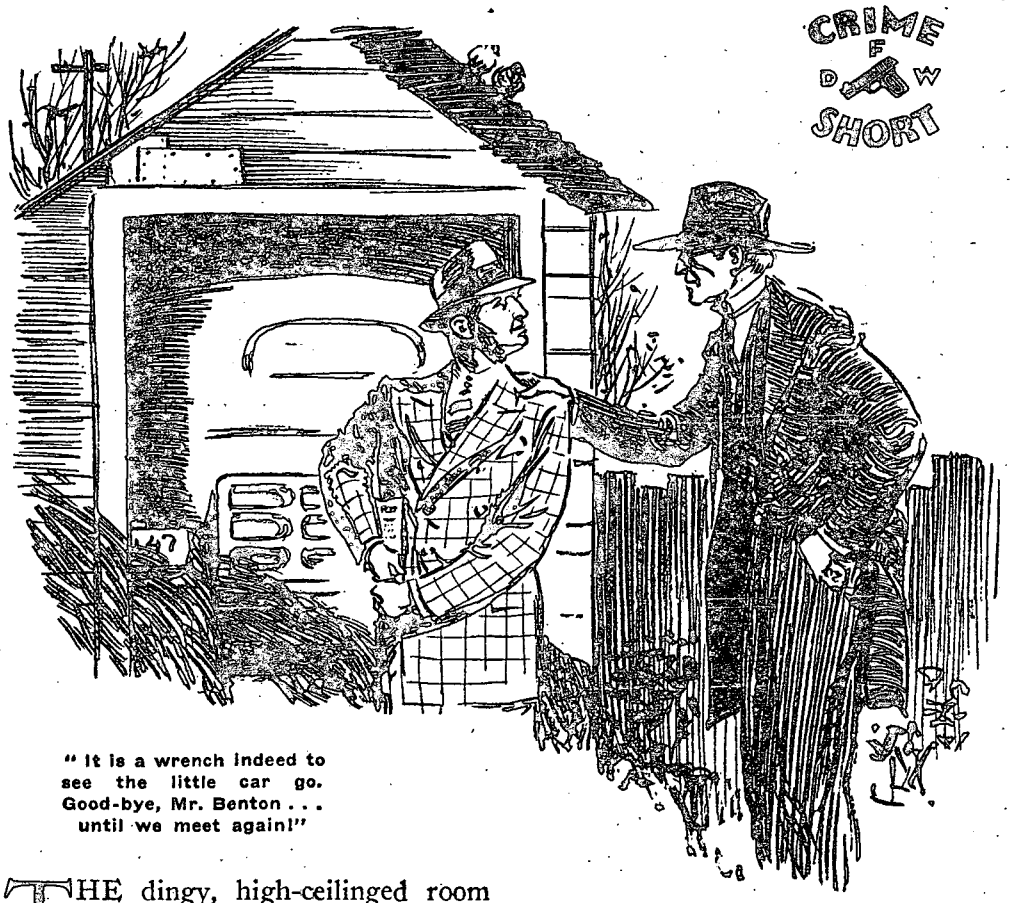
We Meet Again

By
Charles Molyneux Brown



"It is a wrench indeed to see the little car go. Good-bye, Mr. Benton . . . until we meet again!"

THE dingy, high-ceilinged room in the Majestic Hotel with its stingy complement of battered furniture was no bargain at four dollars a day, double, but it suited Buzz Biscoe and his pal, Slats Connolly, very nicely.

The Majestic was a frowsily respectable hostelry, largely patronized by rural visitors to Bluff City and their families, with a sprinkling of sad-looking traveling men who had to pay expenses out of hard-earned commissions.

Buzz Biscoe, Queer-Shover, Was an Artist in His Way. But the World of Art Is Large, and Buzz Had Quite a Few Things to Learn!

Buzz Biscoe, shuffling a breakfast toothpick between loose lips, was reading the morning paper, with a hawk eye for obscure items of local police news.

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Slats Connolly was seated at the small desk, engaged in an odd occupation, humming a monotonous tune over the job. Meticulously and with assiduous attention to details, Slats was making antiques out of suspiciously new and crisp examples of a clever but crooked engraver's dubious works of art.

There was a thin sheaf of the new notes before him on the desk. The process was much the same each time. Slats would rub his palms on an oily rag lightly sprinkled with lampblack. He would take one of the crisp slips from the sheaf, crush it first in his right hand, then his left. Then would follow a vigorous massage between his palms, crinkling, creasing and breaking down crispness. The oil film and the lampblack softened and soiled the paper.

AT the end of several minutes of such treatment, the object handled had taken on the appearance of at least five years of aging in constant circulation. After a last critical inspection, Slats would add the slips to the growing pile on his left.

Buzz Biscoe rattled his paper, spat out his toothpick and grunted with peculiar emphasis. Slats Connolly's pale eyes glanced quickly.

"What?" he questioned, suspending operations momentarily.

"The Third National Bank reports finding a couple of bum twenty dollar bills in customers' deposits yesterday," Buzz informed him shortly. "I been expecting something like that. I guess we better blow the town, after today."

"I kinda liked it here," Slats sighed, his palms taking up their duties. "Where you think of headin', this time?"

"Dallas. It ain't a long hop, and with the Centennial going on, we ought to be good there for a couple of weeks, maybe."

Buzz flipped pages rapidly until he reached the classified ad section, took out his penknife and pared a strip from the center of a page.

"Whatcha cuttin' out?" Slats observed that.

"Used car ads. I been thinking, Slats, that we'd buy us a good car and travel the highways. That's safer than any other way, and we can always do a little business mooching along."

"Say, that ain't a bad idea!" Slats approved brightly. "Only why buy a bus? Just name the make an' model you like, an' I can pick one off the streets an hour after sundown any day."

"Nix. Ain't you never going to forget old tricks, dumb-bell? You're learning a cushy game now." Buzz was a trifle disgusted. "We don't take no chances on hot cars. We'll be covering a lot of territory and Uncle Sam pokes his nose into this business of wheeling hot ones from state to state."

"Yeah, and it kinda peeves the old gent when this stuff gets to flyin' around." Slats eyed the little piles before him. "The rap is a whole lot tougher, too, if he catches up with you."

"You let me do the worrying about that," Buzz warned briskly, and studied his clipping. An ad near the middle caught his eye.

> MUST SACRIFICE my 1935 Roamer sedan. Good tires, paint and mechanical condition. Cash. Rev. Beecher, 7-2257-J.

He went to the telephone and called the number. A weary-voiced woman answered, instructing him to hold the wire when he asked for the Reverend

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Beecher. Presently a hearty bass voice boomed in his ear.

Buzz asked a few questions about the car, ascertained the address of the advertiser and promised to get out there within a half hour. Then he donned the jacket of his swanky gabardine suit, perked a vivid four-dollar tie before the cracked mirror, and preened his dapper, skinny person.

Slats was a little worried.

"You reckon we ought to work any today?" he inquired dubiously.

"Nix. I don't want you circulating any today," Buzz ruled. "It's bad enough having you work alone any time, let alone after a rumble. You stick around, and start getting packed up. I'll pick up a car, somewhere, this morning, and tomorrow, bright and early, we're rolling."

He picked up several examples of Slats' work and examined critically.

"Not so much oil next time," he frowned. "Say, we just about got enough stock to start us nicely in Dallas. Remind me to get off an order to the professor for a shipment, when I get back. It can catch up with us at Dallas."

Slats nodded and looked on soberly while Buzz placed half of the stock of aged currency in a handsome pigskin wallet, and tucked the wallet away in an inside breast pocket.

At the door, Buzz delivered a final warning.

"Remember now, you're to stick around the room," he warned. "And don't be spending anything that ain't good money. I'll be seeing you."

II

THE taxi Buzz Biscoe engaged deposited him before a venerable two-story brick house out in a run-down section of the city where odors of boiling vegetables and other smells were redolent in the air.

A man who had been waiting on the porch swung feet down from a railing and hurried down a scabby brick walk to meet the caller.

Buzz Biscoe's shrewd eyes appraised the gaunt figure in the rusty black coat that flapped about hips, and noted the ragged wisps of iron gray hair sticking out from under the band of the dusty black felt hat. The man's broad, ruddy face was wreathed in a welcoming smile and watery blue eyes beamed.

"You are, I presume, the gentleman who called me about my little car?" he boomed eagerly. "I am the Reverend Austin Beecher, sir, and I bid you welcome."

Buzz let his own neatly manicured hand be swallowed up and pressed by a huge paw that felt damp and clammy and wasn't any too clean.

"Yeah," he confirmed, "I phoned you. Maybe your boat is about what I'm looking for, if it's priced right."

"It is a good little car, sir, and it will be a wrench at my heart strings to part with it." The watery blue eyes appraised Buzz's natty attire shrewdly. "But one must eat, and in dire days sacrifices must be made."

The Reverend Beecher sighed gustily, and dabbed at his watery eyes with an unclean handkerchief.

"Unfortunately, I am a shepherd without a flock, at present," he added an explanation. "Might I inquire your avocation, Mr.—?"

"I'm a paperhanger," Buzz told him briskly, and ignored the fish for a handle. "Let's have a look at the car, Reverend."

"Certainly, sir. I have it stored in the garage in the rear of the premises. You—er—noticed, no doubt, that my

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advertisement stated that I must sell for cash? So many have called, mentioning trading and terms."

"Sure, I can lay it on the line, if we trade," Buzz assured him. "I'm flush just now. My business has been humming lately."

"Ah, how fortunate!" The slight anxiety was missing from the booming voice now. "Come, sir, and I shall show you the little car."

The Reverend Beecher swung around the house in long-legged strides. Buzz Biscoe pattered after him, nose wrinkled over the smells. A garage was unlocked and a small sedan disclosed amid miscellaneous plunder stored in the small building.

Buzz poked around the car, while the owner kept up a running fire of praise concerning its merits. The car was in good condition, Buzz observed. Finish and upholstery scarcely showed signs of wear, and tires were nearly new. When the motor was started up it purred smoothly.

Casually he inquired a price. The seller hummed and hawed a bit and finally mentioned one. Buzz shook his head and the seller knocked off fifty dollars in a wink. Buzz knew that the car was a bargain at the first price, but he countered with a still lower offer.

The Reverend Beecher argued manfully, but they finally compromised on a split, and Buzz thought he liked the car for three hundred and twenty-five dollars.

"I'm a business man, Reverend," he announced briskly then. "You got papers to show this boat is all paid for and everything?"

"Assuredly, sir!" The seller fished a folded paper from a pocket of the rusty coat. "Here is my original bill of sale for the little car, receipted."

Buzz examined the paper. It bore the printed head of a firm of automobile dealers, showed the original transaction had been for cash and was receipted. He nodded his satisfaction.

"Suppose you just scratch a few lines on this," he proffered his own fountain pen, "saying you're transferring the car to Thomas Benton, for the three twenty-five."

That was the name Buzz Biscoe used for registering and other purposes. Hastily the Reverend Beecher scratched the desired transfer on the bill of sale, and affixed a flourishing signature.

The watery eyes sparkled, watching Buzz when he produced the pigskin wallet and counted out sixteen twenty-dollar bills into an eager, moist palm. From a little roll in his trousers pocket he skinned off and added a perfectly good five-dollar bill.

The Reverend Beecher handed over the bill of sale and quickly pocketed the money. He was sure there had been no mistake in the count.

"What about the licenses?" Buzz inquired. "Can I get them transferred over to me?"

"Oh, yes! A very simple matter, Mr. Benton." Big hands fumbled in pockets. "You merely take them to the City Hall, present them and pay a small fee. They will"—the hands ceased fumbling and an expression of annoyance crossed the ruddy face. "I am sorry, sir. I just remembered that my wife has those receipts, and she has gone shopping. Could you call by, say, about three this afternoon?"

"O. K. That'll give me time to get 'em transferred today," Buzz agreed lightly, and climbed under the wheel of his purchase. "Is there gas enough to get me back uptown, Reverend?"

"Just about enough, sir, I think. Ah me! It is a wrench indeed to see the lit-

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tle car go. Good-by, Mr. Benton, and thank you, very much. The best of luck to you, young man, until we meet again!"

Buzz Biscoe grinned, backing the car out of the garage. It wasn't likely, he thought, that his path would cross that of the Reverend Beecher again.

"So-long, Reverend! Better luck to you!" he called, heading the car for the street, anxious to get away from the smells.

AT the first filling station encountered, Buzz bought gas and had the car serviced. It was a pleasant morning, not too warm. The idea of a drive in his new purchase intrigued him.

He considered driving to the Majestic and picking up Slats Connolly, and dismissed the thought quickly. It would be just as well for Slats to hang around the hotel today. Slats was a pretty good pal, not overly bright, and worked under direction well. But he lacked a lot of having Buzz's own finesse and aplomb in the ticklish business of circulating counterfeit money.

The trouble with Slats was that he wanted to convert the queer into sound currency at every opportunity. He wanted to hang a piece of paper in every place visited, which wasn't always good business.

Buzz wheeled the little car out Union Boulevard to the Parkway, and started a round of the park system. The Roamer performed sweetly. The car wasn't a year old, and he didn't think it had been driven more than the six thousand miles the speedometer registered. At the price he'd paid for it, the car was a bargain.

Thoroughly enjoying his drive, the time slipped away. Buzz was surprised, glancing at his strap watch, to discover that it was nearly noon. He headed for uptown and the hotel. Slats might get restless and get out on the street. If he did, he'd be sure to shove one or two of those queer twenties, and that mightn't be so good.

Buzz hadn't driven five blocks on Western Avenue when a pair of motorcycle traffic cops roared up, one on either side of him, and curtly flagged him to the curb.

His heart began to pound and his mouth went dry, obediently making the stop. He tried to recall if he had passed up a red light, or made some minor traffic infraction. He got a grip on his nerves and eyed the officers with an air of surprised meekness.

They put their bikes on the props and walked around the sedan. Apprehensively Buzz saw them check the license plates with a paper one of them had. Their glances, directed at him then, were dark and foreboding. One of them raised the hood and took a peep at the motor numbers, then came up to the window where Buzz hung out anxiously.

"Let's see your driver's license," he demanded curtly.

"You got me, officer," Buzz essayed a feeble grin. "I just bought this boat a couple of hours ago. I haven't had time to get me a driver's license, or have the state and city licenses changed over to me. I was going to do that, the first thing after lunch."

"Yeah? Well, it happens this car is sizzling hot, young fellow. You just head for headquarters and we'll talk to Lieutenant Sparks about the business. Tim and me will ride along with you just to be sure you don't miss the way."

There wasn't anything else to do about it. The last place in the world

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Buzz Biscoe wanted to visit was police headquarters. Gulping, he meshed gears and started out, the motorcycle escort hanging on his rear wheels.

III

A FLINTY-EYED man at the desk in the Automobile Division office at headquarters glanced up when Buzz Biscoe entered there flanked by the two motorcycle cops. He gave Buzz a searching head-to-foot stare and then eyed the officers inquiringly.

"We picked this one up," the spokesman for the pair explained, "out on Western Avenue. He's driving a Roamer six sedan that was snatched off the street a couple of nights ago. It's got the original numbers on it and everything. He claims he bought the car this morning, and he ain't got any driver's license. We thought you'd better talk to him."

The lieutenant grunted, and swiveled his stare to Buzz Biscoe.

"Who did you buy the car from, and where?" he demanded coldly.

"I bought it from a preacher living out on West Elm—number fourteen seventy-six," Buzz blurted. "He had it advertised in the morning paper. Look, here's the ad, and the bill of sale he gave me."

The lieutenant looked over the two bits of evidence offered, first the ad clipping, where Buzz Biscoe's trembling forefinger indicated the ad that had snared him, and then at the bill of sale.

"Burton Brothers Auto Company sold the car, in the first place, to this Beecher party, did they?" he grunted. "H'mmmm. Ever hear of that outfit, McHugh?"

"Yeah, they went out of business the first year of the depression," the tall motorcycle man grinned. "The parson—or somebody—must have got a hold of some of their old stationery."

The neckband of Buzz Biscoe's shirt was choking him a little, and despite the ceiling fan overhead and the three buzz-fans cooling the office, he had begun to sweat.

"What's your name, and your business?" the lieutenant demanded of him. "Where do you live?"

"I—uh—I'm Thomas Benton, and I'm stopping at the Majestic Hotel," Buzz gulped. "I've just been in town a few days, and I was figuring on leaving tomorrow. I bought the car to drive. Listen, we got to get this bird that hung the car on me!"

He tried to get outraged emphasis in that last. The lieutenant looked down at the bill of sale, then at the two motorbyke men.

"Slide out to the Western Avenue address," he instructed. "If you find this Beecher, bring him in."

Saluting briskly, the pair departed. Buzz Biscoe fidgeted there on his feet.

"Sit down over there by the window, and cool off, Mr. Benton," the lieutenant suggested. "When they bring your man in, we'll see about things."

Buzz Biscoe went over and sat down by the window. Neither the breeze there nor the currents kicked up by the fans cooled him much. His active, shrewd brain was racing.

He was in a spot and there was no denying it. When they got that sanctimonious slicker up here, they'd fan him for the jack passed over for the car purchase. All those twenties would attract attention, for sure. Most anything might come out of this, and nothing remotely pleasant. Buzz Biscoe sweated, as minutes dragged by on the wall clock.

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THE lieutenant apparently was ignoring him, and very busy at his desk, using the phones a lot. He spoke softly and Buzz couldn't get his conversations.

Every so often a man would come into the office, exchange a few words with the lieutenant at the desk, then go out again. Each time cold eyes would give Buzz a searching once over. He knew that the men were dicks, and he suspected they had been summoned here just to look him over.

That didn't worry him so much. So far as he knew, he was unknown to Bluff City dicks. It was the prospect of the scene with the Reverend Beecher that was giving him the jitters.

After some twenty minutes of such mental torture, Officer McHugh strode in, alone. Buzz Biscoe's heart did a couple of flipflops and stilled, awaiting the officer's report.

"Where's your man?" The lieutenant's scowl was severe.

"He's done a fade," McHugh reported. "The dame that runs the boarding house said he blew in four days ago, and turned up with a car Tuesday night, about ten, and stored it in her garage. He paid up his bill and blew in a taxi, fifteen minutes after the deal with Benton there."

Buzz Biscoe's heart resumed normal functioning, except for a little speed. He gulped, mopping his forehead. The lieutenant looked at him.

"I guess you're out your three twenty-five, Mr. Benton," he said regretfully. "If you'll give us a description of this Beecher party, we'll try and pick him up, before he lams town."

Buzz got out of his chair. His knees were a little shaky but his sweating had stopped. This was a break.

"I guess I'm a sucker," he mumbled. "I ought to have looked the bird up before I traded. I'm stuck, all right."

Then, very glibly, he gave an excellent description of an individual conjured up purely from his imagination, and not in the least resembling the Reverend Austin Beecher. As far as Buzz Biscoe was concerned, he only wished for that slicker freedom and many miles of separation.

"If you snag him, lieutenant"—Buzz edged confidently toward the corridor door—"you can catch me at the Majestic and let me know. I'd like to have my jack back."

He stopped, abruptly, when two of the dicks who had been in to look him over entered the office together.

"About that party, lieutenant," one of them announced heavily, "we didn't find nothing in the collection of hot car mugs that fits."

The lieutenant frowned. Buzz Biscoe quaked. He knew they were talking about his mug, all right.

"Stick around your hotel, Mr. Benton," the lieutenant said, after a moment's hesitation. "We may pick up this Beecher any minute, after the flash goes out."

Interrupted heart action started within Buzz Biscoe's breast. He nodded, and slid from the office.

BUZZ BISCOE bounced into the room at the Majestic, startling Slats, who was drowsing in a chair. One look at his pal's pale face and Slats scrambled erect.

"Don't ask questions." Buzz snatched up a suitcase. "Get packed. We gotta lam, and lam quick!"

Ten minutes later they were down at the desk, carrying their bags. The slow-moving clerk started reckoning up the bill, while Buzz and the bewildered Slats waited at the desk.

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The bill was twelve dollars and a few dimes for phone calls. Buzz hauled out the pigskin wallet and leafed out a twenty. A big hand reached over his shoulder and plucked the wallet from his fingers. He spun around, to stare into the grim countenance of one of the pair of dicks he had last seen in the lieutenant's office. The other one of the pair was stepping up to Slats Connolly purposefully.

Buzz wilted against the desk, watching the grim one look over the contents of the still bulging pigskin wallet.

"Well, well!" the dick exclaimed, grinning. "Come on down to headquarters, Benton. You and your pal. We picked up Beecher, trying to buy a ducat to St. Looey at the bus station, with a phony twenty just like these samples of paper you're carrying. When he described the man who unloaded them on him, I hustled over here, thinking you might be leaving suddenly."

In the police car, into which Buzz and Slats were herded roughly, along with their bags, the dick added a few more words of explanation:

"The Reverend Beecher turned out to be Mike Crowder, one of the smoothest car snatchers operating. The want ad gag is a favorite of his."

Buzz Biscoe gulped and made no comment. Slats Connolly still was too bewildered to talk.

At headquarters a peppery inspector of detectives and able aids reduced the pair to sweating, wilted wrecks in twenty minutes of questioning. What Buzz didn't spill, Slats eagerly pieced out, even to the name and address of the man supplying the bogus twenties that had been giving Treasury Department operatives plenty to worry about.

"Take 'em away, and lock 'em up!" the inspector wound up the grilling. "And somebody call the Federal Building and let 'em know what we've got. It ought to make 'em happy."

The wilted pair stumbled along to a cell, and were locked up together. When the door clanged and the turnkey trudged out of the bullpen, the bars of a cell door opposite rattled noisily.

Buzz Biscoe looked that way, and snarled bitter curses when he observed the broad, ruddy face pressed against the bars of that door. The face wore a malicious leer.

"Greetings, brother!" a bass voice boomed in the bullpen. "We meet again!"

A Sign of Weakness

MOST of those on trial for murder maintain an appearance of confidence, real or affected, until the jury has rendered its verdict. A dramatic exception was Dr. Lamson, the English physician who poisoned his crippled brother-in-law with antimony. As the jury retired to consider their verdict, he signed a will leaving his little property to his wife. For him it must have been a fearful moment, as by that act he admitted his belief that the jury would find him guilty. No wonder that his signature betrayed a hand terribly shaken. But it had to be done then, because from the moment the jury did hand in its verdict of guilty he ceased to exist as a citizen, and his signature to any legal document would be worthless.

—*J. L. Considine.*

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Civil Service Q & A

By "G-2"

Could You Qualify as—

Police Patrolman	Special Agent (G-Man)
Police Detective	Secret Service Operative
Policewoman	Post Office Inspector
Fingerprint Expert	Customs Patrol
State Trooper	Immigration Patrol
Crime Prevention Investigator	Anti-Narcotic Agent
Probation Officer	Parole Investigator
Criminologist	Prison Keeper
Police Radio Expert	Internal Revenue Agent
	Alcohol Tax Agent

This department will give you every week typical questions asked in civil service examinations.

The Grapevine Test

DETECTIVES engaged in narcotic-squad work must possess a thorough knowledge of the workings of the underworld grapevine and be able to speak the language of the professional criminal. Sources of drug supply are rooted in the underworld and the drug peddler finds there his most lucrative market. The grapevine is the underworld's system of communication, and unless a narcotic squad man can speak the language of criminals he might as well stay home.

In all large cities, especially those along the borders and coasts, police narcotic-squads, often working in conjunction with federal anti-narcotic agents, handle all drug traffic cases. Where civil service rules, a man may "make" the narcotic squad only after he has entered the police department as a patrolman, and, before he is assigned to dope cases, he must demonstrate his ability to deal with underworld characters and understand their ways and their chatter. As a rule, dope-squad dicks are specialists in underworld ways. As a matter of fact, the more they look like dope addicts, the better suited they are for the work. Most of the dope-squad dicks this writer has encountered are men of slight build, sallow-skinned and nervous in manner, but they are among the shrewdest of sleuths, for the drug trafficker is the wiliest of criminals.

Previous experience as a city police narcotic-squad detective would undoubtedly be considered as qualifying experience in the U. S. tests for anti-narcotic work. Usually, a written test on the practical side of narcotic detection is given to police department members seeking assignments on narcotic squads. The sample test which follows was given in 1934 to a class of seventy policemen. Though you may not be interested in trying for a federal anti-narcotic job, this sample test will tell how much you know about the underworld. If you have been a fairly steady reader of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, you may be able to answer some of the test questions which have to do with the slang or lingo of the underworld. The slang tests are important, not only because a dope-squad dick must know how to use it, but also because most of the slang expressions employed in the underworld originated with drug addicts in moments when they are "all hopped up."

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To pass this test, a mark of 70 on the entire examination was required. A score of 100 is, of course, perfect. There are twenty questions with five points for each correct answer.

Special knowledge: Three possible answers are given to each question. Select the one answer you think correct and ring the letter preceding it.

Q 1—Cocaine is extracted from (a) coal tar; (b) coca leaves; (c) alkali.

Q 2—When an addict is under the influence of cocaine he (a) will act without caution or judgment; (b) be extremely cautious and bright; (c) fall asleep.

Q 3—A " coke sniffer " is an addict who (a) is always sniffing; (b) administers doses of cocaine to himself by sniffing it with the nostrils; (c) is chronically afflicted with the sniffles.

Q 4—Heroin is derived from (a) a seaweed; (b) morphine; (c) sulphur.

Q 5—From the standpoint of public safety, narcotic drugs are particularly dangerous because they affect the criminal's (a) brain cells; (b) his eyes; (c) his brute instincts.

Q 6—A " junkie " is a (a) user of drugs; (b) a seller of drugs; (c) a worthess character.

Q 7—A " hype " is an addict who (a) is hypnotized by drugs; (b) who uses a doctor's syringe to inject dope into his body; (c) a drug addict of good family and well educated.

Q 8—A " gow rag " is a (a) cloth bandage which is used by a hype to cover wounds in his body made by needle jabs; (b) package of drugs wrapped in a shirt; (c) a pair of socks or a handkerchief which has been soaked in a solution of cocaine or heroin, dried and then passed to an addict confined in a prison cell.

Q 9—When a drug addict says, " I feel like kicking the log around," he means, (a) death; (b) he has had a shot of dope and feels that he has great strength; (c) he wants to go to sleep.

Q 10—" Hop " and " mud " have the same meaning, which is (a) a supply of cocaine; (b) opium; (c) any kind of narcotics.

Q 11—Opium prepared for smoking looks like (a) flour; (b) thick molasses; (c) brick dust.

Q 12—The expression " c in the worm," means, (a) narcotics in a raw state; (b) a cocaine supply which is hidden; (c) drugs taken internally.

Q 13—A " carrier " in the drug traffic means, (a) any person who has it in his possession; (b) the agent who transports narcotics from foreign countries into the U. S.; (c) the receptacle in which contraband drugs is carried.

Q 14—The expression " beef, lam, duck," used by drug peddlers, means (a) a square meal; (b) scatter on the getaway; (c) a supply of assorted drugs.

Q 15—As a narcotic squad detective you receive an anonymous letter as follows: " If you put the peepers on a cinder dick that lives in the flop joint at 10 Grand Street you will make the carrier that is handling plenty decks of m." Rewrite this letter so that it will be intelligible to any person who can read. (Allow 1 point for each word translated into plain English.)

DUTIES AND JUDGMENT

Q 16—In the pocket of a drug peddler you have arrested this penciled note is found. Over the face of the note is the stamp of a censor. The note: " Dear Joe—It is getting tougher and tougher here, and I am not feeling so well. I need a deck, and if you will send me same I will fix you up with a kite with tail—Bill." This note is a request (a) for a deck of playing cards; (b) for money to take a trip on a boat; (c) a supply of drugs and in payment Bill will smuggle out of prison a letter with an enclosure of money in it.

Q 17—In a raid upon a Chinese laundry you find buried in a box of starch three tins of opium, also a note addressed to the Chinaman who owns the laundry. The note says: " Received the mud O. K. and would like some more in about a week to cure a boil on my neck." Questioned about the opium the laundry-owner is shocked to find it hidden in the starch and he asserts he knows nothing about the opium; that some Chinese employee must have hidden it there. He denies that he has trafficked in opium and, in explaining the note, he asserts that it was written to him by a young Chinaman to whom he had sent a Chinese preparation of clay to be used as a poultice for boils. You know he is lying because, (a) the box of starch

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bears his name and address stenciled on it; (b) the note positively incriminates him in an opium transaction; (c) he has all the appearances of an opium-smoker.

Q 18—The Inspector in command of the Narcotic Squad gives you this order, "Get yourself ready to go on a plant." By this he means you are to engage (a) in a raid of a drug factory; (b) take up watch of a suspect or place; (c) dig up a stock of planted drugs.

Q 19—It is necessary to entrap drug peddlers in the act of selling drugs because (a) it is the safest way to handle desperate men; (b) the testimony of drug addicts alone, as to a transaction with a peddler, is not reliable because they may testify under the influence of drugs; (c) it is impossible to get a line on drug peddlers in any other way.

Q 20—You are detailed to trap a suspected drug peddler who is notorious for his ability to beat the law. He has been arrested three times in the past. By bribing the jury in each case, he went scot free. He has declared in writing that the next time he is arrested he will slap a suit for heavy damages against the man who arrests him. This peddler is known to have powerful political connections. The inspector in command orders you to get him in the act of passing drugs and accepting money therefor. The inspector hands you three $100-bills, each bill secretly marked by the inspector, and he informs you this money is to be passed to the peddler by the stool-pigeon you employ in the trap. Under your instructions the stool-pigeon meets the peddler in a park at night while you are concealed behind a near-by tree. You see the peddler take the bills from the stool and then pass a paper packet to the stool. You spring from your hiding-place, grab the marked money from the peddler, the paper packet from the stool, and, upon opening it, discover white powder that looks like cocaine. The peddler laughs in your face, declaring that the powder is nothing but starch and quinine to make it taste bitter. Nevertheless you haul the peddler off to the station house where a chemist's report announces that the powder is starch and quinine. Still you book the peddler for (a) selling narcotics; (b) committing a nuisance in a public place; (c) larceny by trick and device.

Key answers: Q 1—(b); Q 2—(a); Q 3—(b); Q 4—(b); Q 5—(a) when the brain cells are affected a man may do anything; Q 6—(a) drugs are known as junk because they render the user worthless to society; Q 7—(b); Q 8—(c) the recipient of a "gow rag" may suck it and obtain the effect he craves; Q 9—(b) he dreams of strength enough to kick a big log around; Q 10—(b); Q 11—(b); Q 12—(b) a worm buries itself, hence, to "worm" means to bury or hide; Q 13—(b); Q 14—(b) some one has beefed (complained) so lam (beat it) and duck (hide); Q 15—"If you put the eyes (peepers) on a railroad detective (cinder dick) that lives in a rooming house (flopjoint) at 10 Grand Street, you will get (make) the carrier that is handling supplies (decks) of morphine (m)."

Q 16—(c) a "deck" is a supply of drugs and "kite with tail" is a letter with money in it smuggled out of a prison.

Q 17—(b) the note was addressed to the laundry owner and mud means opium.

Q 18—(b) when a detective goes out to watch anything or lay in wait, or arrange a trap, he goes on a plant.

Q 19—(b) an officer of the law who witnesses a drug transaction can therefore testify to it in support of the stool's testimony.

Q 20—(c) obviously a larcenous fraud was committed by the peddler, and since the amount involved was more than $50, he committed a felony.

THE Q AND A BOX

Henry Fisher, Des Moines, and others.—The position of special agent, Federal Bureau of Investigation (G-man), is one of the few federal detective services not under civil service, but it may be brought under civil service administration at any time now.

Andrew Whiting, New Orleans.—Cannot tell you when a test for post office inspector will be held, and, anyway, you must have been in the P. O. service for a specified time to take the test. The P. O. Inspector test recently published followed the pattern of a test given some years ago.

Next Week—What an Application Requires

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Picking Your Own Pocket

The Black and White Legions

By
Frank Wrentmore

This is the forty-eighth of a series of articles exposing business rackets that cost you billions of dollars every year! Mr. Wrentmore is an authority on swindles and frauds, well known to legal, financial, and commercial associations.—The Editor.

THE indictment of the members of the Black Legion in Detroit for kidnaping and murder and the various subsequent widespread investigations may or may not disclose the many questionable "fraternities" which are in existence in various parts of the United States.

The average American is a good "joiner." He likes to appear before his fellows in a plumed chapeau with plenty of gold lace on his uniform and a sword dangling between his legs and tripping him up every other step. The more sinister organizations affect the long gown with a hood and the death's head with the face of the member concealed by a mysterious black mask. Other "fraternal" get-ups are even more fantastic.

It is only occasionally, however, that a Black Legion or a Ku Klux Klan makes the front pages of the country's newspapers by reason of some horrible atrocity. The great majority of the pseudo-fraternities are comparatively harmless, except for the fact that countless thousands of dupes are mulcted of initiation fees and dues which trickle pleasantly into the pockets of the organizers and promoters.

In DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY of November 9, 1935, I outlined the career of one Hugo B. Monjar whose Decimo Club was comprised of some 60,000 members, each of whom paid an initiation fee of twenty dollars and monthly dues of two dollars until the authorities in various states took the steps necessary for the dissolution of the organization and the disillusionment of its members. Mr. Monjar is now devoting his attention quietly to the formation of a successor organization to the ill-fated Decimo. From different parts of the country come reports that the Mantle Club has obtained a foothold and a few members.

It preaches no vicious propaganda, but the operations are covered by a mantle of secrecy except for the fact that it is known that the initiation fee is twenty dollars and there are monthly dues. Since my original article was published, the Boston authorities have started an investigation of the organization there.

Once a man learns how easy it is to form an organization and collect an easy living in the form of fees and dues from the gullible, he continues to collect as long as the fees and dues are collectible. Edward Young Clarke, former Kleagle of the Ku Klux Klan, follow-

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ing the dissolution of the Klan, tried to organize other fraternities, namely, the Mystic Kingdom, the Supreme Kingdom (which later became "The Supreme Kingdom and Sovereign Fortress") and when these were not successful he started the Esskaye Movement, Inc., (Esskaye from the initials of Supreme Kingdom). Originally organized in Atlanta, Georgia, it moved, with Clarke, successively, to Jacksonville, New York City and Chicago. Clarke was convicted of mail fraud in Jacksonville in connection with this organization and that bubble burst.

THE most recent application of the fraternity idea is at once pathetic and at the same time, slightly humorous. This is strictly a business proposition, regardless of the disguise. Behind it all is, of all people, our old friend, the book agent. Here's how it works.

"Sorority representatives" — book agent to you — of certain publishers contact office girls in the large cities and seek to interest them in a Greek letter sorority. My dictionary defines "sorority" as "a woman's club or college association, corresponding to the college men's fraternity," but very, very few of the girls who are induced to join these sororities have ever been to college. Anybody can join.

Nothing is said about buying books —that would be too crude — but the glamour of belonging to the Eta Bita Pie sorority is painted in glowing colors and the social side of the enterprise is stressed.

Culture is the keynote, a course of study is included and the initiation fee is pretty healthy, about forty-five dollars with annual dues of three dollars. The forty-five dollars may be paid in installments and this covers all expenditures except the annual dues.

To give a further semblance of reality the employers of the "sorority representatives" generally assume some trade name in which the word "University" is prominent and instead of using an ordinary book-buying contract the prospect is asked to sign a "membership application" — and this covers the cost of the books very nicely.

The membership applications are usually very flossy, as they should be— and one of them includes the following statement, "To this end the best of myself to Eta Bita Pie, the best of Eta Bita Pie to me." I assure you that I have merely substituted my own phrase for the name of the sorority in the above quotation, silly as it sounds.

Thousands of office girls all over the country have been induced to buy the books of these publishers through the use of this camouflage. It is fairly safe to say that if most of these young ladies had been directly approached to buy a set of the books for twenty-five dollars that they would not have given it a second thought, but when the sale is sugar-coated with the sorority idea they willingly pay forty-five dollars for the same merchandise.

Some of the men in Detroit who are now awaiting trial for kidnaping and murder wish that they had never heard of the Black Legion. Many of the girls who are now members of some of these sororities are likewise bewailing their fate—to a far lesser degree—and are complaining that they have been tricked, as they have.

There are hundreds of good and reputable fraternities whose members derive a real benefit through their membership. The most casual investigation will serve to identify them.

Next Week—The Burial Association Racket

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Solving Cipher Secrets

A cipher is secret writing. The way to solve ciphers is to experiment with substitute letters until real words begin to appear. In solving, notice the frequency of certain letters. For instance, the letters e, t, a, o, n, i, are the most used in our language. So if the puzzle maker has used X to represent e, X will probably appear very frequently. Combinations of letters will also give you clues. Thus, the affixes -ing, -ion, -ally are frequent. Read the helpful hints at the beginning of this department each week. The first cryptogram each week is the easiest.

M. E. OHAVER
"Sunyam"

OUR *Inner Circle Club*—which is composed of solvers who have submitted 1,000 or more answers to this department—now extends the welcoming hand to three new members! The roster of forty-nine members, previously published, is now augmented to fifty-two! Congratulations, new members! And a thousand thanks to each of you, as well!

The three new members were qualified for membership by their May solutions. Here they are: SEE BEE BEE, C. B. Brown, Hamilton, Kans., who totaled 1,002 answers with the May 2 issue; T. Hegarty, Brooklyn, N. Y., who totaled 1,003 answers with the May 16 issue; and ROMEO, John C. Moore, Waynesboro, Pa., who totaled 1,001 answers with the May 30 issue. Members who reached the thousand mark in June will be listed October 3.

In explanation, to become an *Inner Circle Club* member, your 1,000 solutions do not have to be consecutive nor from consecutive issues. Besides, any 100 or more answers sent in this year will list you in our *Honor Roll for 1936!* And one or more answers for any month will put your name in our monthly *Cipher Solvers' Club!* Send in your answers—we'll do the rest!

How a much-used prefix can distort frequencies was well illustrated in last week's Inner Circle cipher No. 210, by Scorpio. Occurring 14 times, the prefix ASPS- (*mono-*) threw the letter count all awry! In such cases it is often an advantage to make a separate frequency table of the repeated combination, with the count for the rest of the cipher in a second table, which will thus appear more nearly normal.

Even so, *mono-* would be one of the first suppositions the solver would make for ASPS- in this instance. Besides, Scorpio was generous enough to include in his concoction the distinctive pattern ASPSHSPSGK, which, guessed as *monotonous*, would unlock ASPSHSPVX (*monoton--*), *monotoned;* and so on.

This week's ciphers: Ten-Fifteen uses a key-phrase, numbered from *o* to *9*, in his cryptic division. *Zero* may be found by elimination. And T × O = O will give you symbol O. In G. E. Long's cryptogram, compare P, ASY, and SYKY; also ER and REA. Follow up with SUB and BYYR. Then substitute in AEOGBAERY and fill in the missing letters.

Identify the ending -EEUE in Blackbird's contribution. Then complete EURE and RD. The affixes LF- and -LFP will then help you with LFECMZFXU; etc. Eibsirf's construction is doubly pangrammatic, using all 26 letters both inside and outside the quotes. Twelve symbols are used twice each! You might consider LC and CLF, also the endings -DBB and -BGB.

In U. U. Jeff's message, FE- will aid you in guessing the compound MFKD-MFZRPFEZ. The answers to all of this week's cipher puzzles will be published next week. The asterisks in Nos. 212 and 214 indicate capitalized words.

No. 211—Cryptic Division. By Ten-Fifteen.

NOT) ROVERS (OMA
RE SO

REUR
ETMS

NMOS
OAEO

OMO

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No. 212—Amusing Epitaph. By G. E. Long.

BYYR ER P AEOGBAERY: "SYKY NUYB ETK GTAFSYK, *DESR *X. *SPLYB, NLRFSYX GL ASY GELB ZEK REA OYRXURV SUB 'HYUVSB.'"

No. 213—Advance Advertising. By Blackbird.

JFZHLEO GUMXOZFR EURE QLMU RD OLE ERDMU, RD XDKKUXR LFECMZFXU; BZEEUE ZGDFP YTERZFVUME AZRXOLFP QLMU; PLHUE ROUG QMDSUF ECXJUME; ZEJE ROUG RD OLE "YLP QLMU EZKU, FUNR AUUJ!"

No. 214—Key Clicks. By Eibsirf.

XO DTYDEEDOG ZNFXBD CLF RDXELVB GHZKBGB: "BNKZ AVKYQEH IH DTZFDBB GSDOGH-CKUD WVMB LC FDJ *XPXRLO FVP." IVG GFH GNKB WLQDF LO HLVF GHZDSFKGDF JVFKOM UDFH AVKDG NLVFB.

No. 215—A Run for Fun. By U. U. Jeff.

ABCDEFGD AHJDK FEABKDL MHBK MFKDNDE OFPR MSGTD SGSKN. MFKD-MFZRPFEZ SUUSKSPBT TPKBVJ HNEFWBT, RFP TRHU OFELHO, PBKEDL PBKPGD. TRHKP ASFG TPSX VHECDKPDL AHJDTPDK.

No. 216—The Noise Annoys. By H. F. Wickner.

ABCDEFG HEJGB KECLMBNB ODFJG PJQDNLER CSJHNBTU. RBMFSEGF JMTEDGRD MGNLCMGF DPBLEBGJV PMNEREJG; HCBNHDRLEKD LCEMPHS ODRJPD FSJNLVU AEJNRB.

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

205—Key: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
E I G H T Y-F O U R

206—Come on, ye musicians! Let's get together! Bring along your violins, trumpets, drums, saxophones, banjos, and have a tooting good time!

207—On a mule we find two feet behind,
Two feet we find before.
But we stand behind, before we find
What the two behind be for!

208—"Have you tasted temporary tedium? Reward cometh in due season; whoso turneth aside from worthy aspirations, liveth to lament."—Artemas.

209—Any fish today?—Carp, flounder, herring, mackerel, perch, salmon, trout, whitefish, sturgeon, catfish, shad, pickerel, tautog, smelt, bass, porgy, kingfish, and halibut.

210—Monophagous monographer, monodynamic monoculist, monotoned monometric monody monologizing monogrammal monochromes, monotonous monotints, monochroic monotypes.

First call, cryptofans, for our September *Cipher Solvers' Club!* To enroll, send us your answers to one or more of this week's puzzles! Address: M. E. Ohaver, DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

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FLASHES from READERS

TIM CODY—whose adventures in Fred MacIsaac's gripping new novel, "DEAD MEN TELL TALES," start in this issue—is going to give you much fine entertainment. If you haven't already started it, do so right away. Otherwise you will miss sharing a lot of splendid action and mystery with one of the most spectacular heroes in the world of detective fiction. And don't forget the exploits of the *Lady from Hell,* in "THE CROSS KILLER AND THE GOLDEN BIER," and those of *Riordan* and *Halloran* in "THE PRIZE DUMB-BELL." Here are some of this week's letters:

Concerning the civilian fight against crime.

DEAR EDITOR:

I have just bought my August 8th issue of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, and I am delighted with the new feature which appears in it: FLASHES FROM THE POLICE FRONT.

This is the sort of thing which I, for one, have been looking for for a long time. For a number of years now, the various agencies of the law have been appealing for aid from civilians in their war against crime.

But all too often, they failed to tell us how to go about helping. A few vague phrases about fearless testimony and bravery in the face of intimidation.

And now DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY comes along and really gives an alert citizen something to work with and something to shoot at. I think it was a fine idea and a fine thing for you to do.

I'm an old stand-by DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY reader anyway, but this certainly is a plus feature in the magazine as far as I am concerned.

Yours,

SAM WILSON,
St. Paul, Minnesota.

Here's a shrewd, discerning reader!

DEAR SIR:

Just a line to tell you how much I enjoyed "THE NIGHT I DIED." If I hadn't read DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY for many years, I would hardly have expected to find it in a magazine printed on rough paper.

I'm a little tickled by the *anonymous* business, because anyone who has watched the meteoric rise of one of your authors would be able to spot that yarn as his right away.

Keep up the good work. DFW is a swell buy for a dime.

Faithfully,

JED RICHTER,
Baton Rouge, La.

The gentleman from New York asks some questions.

DEAR SIR:

I have been experimenting with various detective magazines for about three years now. I guess you know what I mean. I haven't bought any single one regularly, and I've pretty well covered the field.

This is merely to inform you that that is all

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over now, and that I am a confirmed DFW fan from now on until the cows come home.

Why should I read inferior stories when I can get DFW every week? Why should I buy 128 (or less) page magazines when I can get 144 pages in DFW? And why, since DFW is a dime a copy, should I pay more for less?

I'll have to admit it took me a long time to figure all this out, but now that I've made the grade, here's one reader who's in the fold for good.

Yours sincerely,
BERT WALKER,
Syracuse, N. Y.

Flashes from the Police Front

(Continued from Page 7)

INSURANCE

Unlicensed Policies Offered by Agents

AGENTS claiming to represent the Nurses Mutual Protective Corporation, Jacksonville, Fla., are selling policies in Kansas and Missouri.

This company is not licensed to sell insurance in these and many other states, and the agents are subject to arrest.

COUNTERFEIT

Swindlers Borrow on Fake Stocks

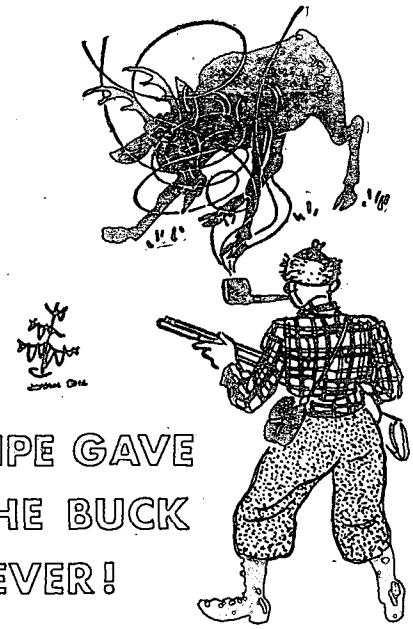
A WARNING has been issued in Detroit against swindlers who negotiate loans by means of counterfeit stock certificates purporting to be those of the Texas Gulf Sulphur Company. Workmanship on these certificates is said to be very good.

CRYPTOGRAM FANS!

"Solving Cipher Secrets" is a fascinating word game. Have you tried M. E. Ohaver's popular department in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY? Mr. Ohaver has prepared a book full of advice and hints as to how to play the game. Experts will find the book invaluable. Novices will find it opens up entirely new angles. Get

"CRYPTOGRAM SOLVING"
By M. E. Ohaver

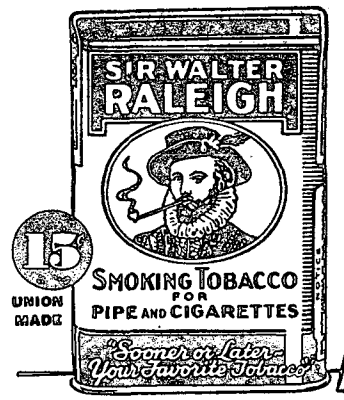
Send 25c to DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY
280 Broadway, New York City



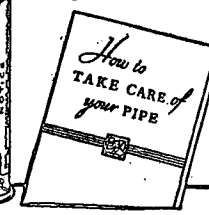
PIPE GAVE THE BUCK FEVER!

BOYS, we see no sport in gassing deer with a gooey old pipe filled with garlicy tobacco. But we see a lot of pleasure in a well-kept briar packed with a gentle, fragrant blend like Sir Walter Raleigh. We've put a lifetime into mixing this rare combination of well-aged Kentucky Burleys that wouldn't nip a baby's tongue or a doe's nose. Sir Walter's got a delightful aroma all its own. Buck up and join the happy herd of Sir Walter Raleigh smokers. You'll have the world eating out of your hand! (Full tin, with heavy gold-foil wrap for freshness, at the unbelievably low price of 15¢.)

SWITCH TO THE BRAND OF GRAND AROMA



FREE booklet tells how to make your old pipe taste better, sweeter; how to break in a new pipe. Write for copy today. Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corporation. Louisville, Ky. Dept. MS-69



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COMING NEXT WEEK!

THE GLEEFUL GUNMAN

***A Dramatic Novelette* by Johnston McCulley**

A COP a week! That was the mad killer's cry. One cop each week writhing as he died in the gutter. But those assassins did not know what they bought that morning when they beefed *Danny Kilroy* with two bullets in the back—when *Rhinoceros,* the toughest cop ever born, set out to bring them in, dead or alive, with his own peculiar methods.

MADAME JONIAUX REGRETS—

***A True Story* by John Kobler**

THE spectacular career of a murderess who lived like a queen. Pearls, gems, lace and silk; brilliant receptions and gay society! These meant life for *Madame Joniaux*—in more ways than one!

MURDER HARVEST

***A Gripping Novelette* by Norbert Davis**

CAN a killer turn his back on his past? In his time, *Jake Gordon* had sown the seeds of death. And now, old and crippled and forlorn, he watched the harvest being reaped. . . .

Stories of Fiction and Fact by FRED MacISAAC, L. RON HUBBARD, CONVICT 12627, and many others. Plus DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY features by L. U. REAVIS, "G-2," FRANK WRENTMORE and M. E. OHAVER.

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

TRAIN FOR A FINE HOTEL POSITION

Come to Washington. Qualify in 4 months for well-paid opportunities in Hotel and Institutional Field. Learn on modern hotel equipment. National Placement Service FREE. New day classes start Sept., Oct. Send for FREE book. LEWIS HOTEL TRAINING SCHOOLS, Div. RMP-7193, Washington, D. C.

NO JOKE TO BE DEAF

—Every deaf person knows that— Mr. Way made himself hear his watch tick after being deaf for twenty-five years, with his Artificial Ear Drums. He wore them day and night. They stopped his head noises. They are invisible and comfortable, no wires or batteries. Write for TRUE STORY. Also booklet on Deafness.

Artificial Ear Drum

THE WAY COMPANY
126 Hofmann Bldg. Detroit, Michigan

High School Course at Home

Many Finish in 2 Years

Go as rapidly as your time and abilities permit. Course equivalent to resident school work — prepares you for entrance to college. Standard H. S. texts supplied — Diploma. Credit for H. S. subjects already completed. Single subjects if desired. High school education is very important for advancement in business and industry and socially. Don't be handicapped all your life. Be a High School graduate. Start your training now. Free Bulletin on request. No obligation.

American School, Dept. H-639, Drexel at 58th, Chicago

LIQUOR HABIT

Send for FREE TRIAL of Noxalco, a guaranteed harmless home treatment. Can be given secretly in food or drink to anyone who drinks or craves Whiskey, Beer, Gin, Home Brew, Wine, Moonshine, etc. Your request for Free Trial brings trial supply by return mail and full $2.00 treatment which you may try under a 30 day refund guarantee. Try Noxalco at our risk. ARLEE CO. Dept. 204 BALTIMORE, MD.

In answering any advertisement on this page it is desirable that you mention this magazine.

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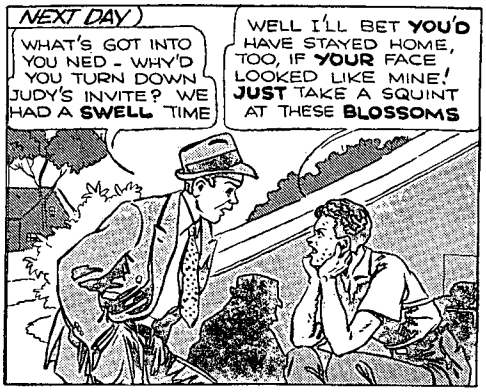
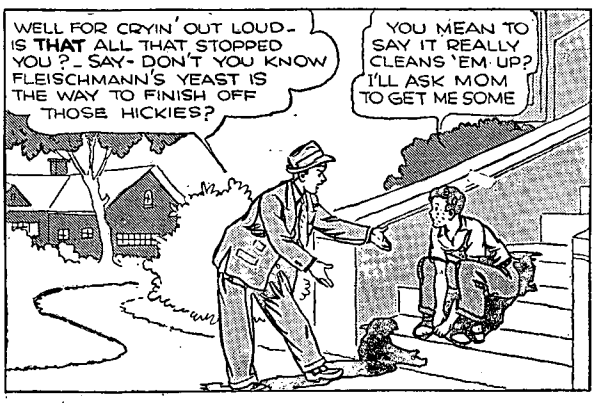
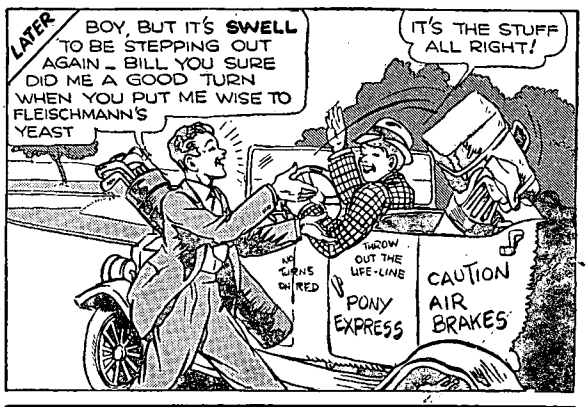
- NED'S PIMPLY SKIN MADE HIM SHUN THE CROWD ..... UNTIL

SAY JUDY—WHAT'S EATING NED? WHY DIDN'T HE COME DOWN WITH US THIS WEEK-END?
I DUN'NO—HE KEPT SAYING HE COULDN'T. HE WON'T DO ANYTHING LATELY—JUST STICKS AROUND HOME ALL THE TIME


NEXT DAY
WHAT'S GOT INTO YOU NED—WHY'D YOU TURN DOWN JUDY'S INVITE? WE HAD A SWELL TIME
WELL I'LL BET YOU'D HAVE STAYED HOME, TOO, IF YOUR FACE LOOKED LIKE MINE! JUST TAKE A SQUINT AT THESE BLOSSOMS


WELL FOR CRYIN' OUT LOUD—IS THAT ALL THAT STOPPED YOU?—SAY—DON'T YOU KNOW FLEISCHMANN'S YEAST IS THE WAY TO FINISH OFF THOSE HICKIES?
YOU MEAN TO SAY IT REALLY CLEANS 'EM UP? I'LL ASK MOM TO GET ME SOME


LATER
BOY, BUT IT'S SWELL TO BE STEPPING OUT AGAIN—BILL YOU SURE DID ME A GOOD TURN WHEN YOU PUT ME WISE TO FLEISCHMANN'S YEAST
IT'S THE STUFF ALL RIGHT!
THROW OUT THE LIFE-LINE
PONY EXPRESS
CAUTION AIR BRAKES

—clears the skin

by clearing skin irritants out of the blood

Don't let Adolescent Pimples spoil YOUR chances for fun . . .

PIMPLES can be real joy-killers to any boy or girl. Yet many young people have skin eruptions after the start of adolescence—from about 13 to 25, or even longer.

During this time, important glands develop and final growth takes place. Disturbances occur throughout the entire body. The skin gets oversensitive. Waste poisons in the blood irritate this sensitive skin. Pimples result.

Fleischmann's fresh Yeast helps correct adolescent pimples. It clears these skin irritants out of the blood. Then, the pimples go.

Eat 3 cakes daily, one before each meal—plain, or in a little water—until your skin clears.

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Luckies — a light smoke

OF RICH, RIPE-BODIED TOBACCO — "IT'S TOASTED"

Never Dry... Never too Moist

Tear the top off a Lucky package. We promise you'll find twenty firm, round, fully-packed Lucky Strikes, just moist enough for the highest kind of smoking pleasure. Moisture content in Luckies is precisely controlled. That is one of the secrets of a Light Smoke. Round and firm, fully packed with no loose ends. Smoke Luckies to your throat's content. Never dry, never too moist—a cigarette conditioned to your taste.

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